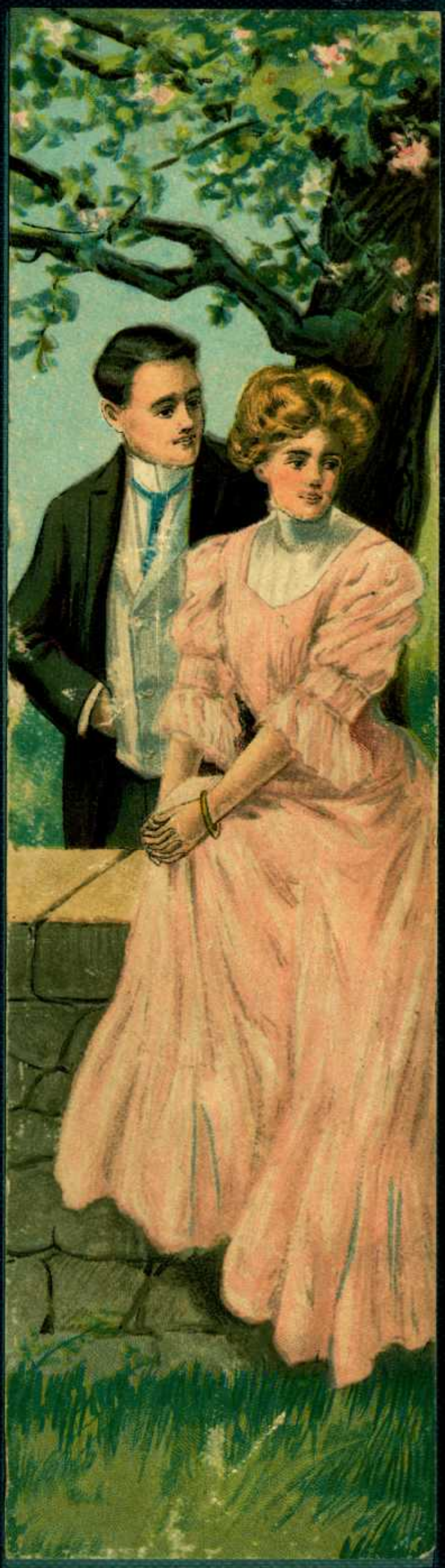
Mystery of Dark Hollow



E.D.E.N. Southworth

17—

THE

MYSTERY OF DARK HOLLOW.

EDITED BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE MISSING BRIDE; OR, MIRIAM, THE AVENGER," "A BEAUTIFUL FIEND."
"HOW HE WON HER," "RETRIBUTION," "CHANGED BRIDES," "TRIED FOR HER LIFE,"
"BRIDE'S FATE," "LADY OF THE ISLE," "A NOBLE LORD," "THE TWO SISTERS,"
"THE WIDOW'S SON," "FALLEN PRIDE," "LOST HEIRESS," "FAMILY DOOM,"
"CRUEL AS THE GRAVE," "GIPSY'S PROPHECY," "HAUNTED HOMESTEAD,"
"CHRISTMAS GUEST," "ALLWORTH ABBEY," "VICTOR'S TRIUMPH,"
"BRIDAL EVE," "FORTUNE SEEKER," "CURSE OF CLIFTON,"
"MAIDEN WIDOW," "FAIR PLAY," "FATAL MARRIAGE,"
"PRINCE OF DARKNESS," "BRIDE OF LLEWELLYN,"
"LOVE'S LABOR WON," "THE DESERTED WIFE,"
"INDIA," "THE WIFE'S VICTORY," "VIVIA,"
"MOTHER-IN-LAW," "THREE BEAUTIES,"
"SPECTRE LOVER," "ARTIST'S LOVE,"
"LOST HEIR OF LINLITHGOW,"
"DISCARDED DAUGHTER."

"Light as the angel shapes that bless
An infant's dream, yet not the less
Rich in all woman's loveliness;—
With eyes so pure, that from their ray
Dark Vice would turn abashed away,
Blinded like serpents, when they gaze
Upon the emerald's virgin blaze."—LALLA ROOKH

NEW YORK
HURST & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS.

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The Mystery of Dark Hollow.

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THE MYSTERY OF DARK HOLLOW.

CHAPTER I.

THE VALLEY AND THE LILY.

THE village of Millburn extends semi-circularly around the borders of a delightful valley, at least two days' journey from any town of importance, by the best means of transportation obtainable.

This little vale is about twenty miles long from north to south, two miles wide from east to west, and is shut out from the rest of the world by a belt of lofty, wooded mountains, which admit of but one winding pass through them. It skirts their base, and affords the only access and egress to and from the valley.

The houses, constructed of frame, and rarely more than two stories in height, are exceedingly neat, and generally ornate, the prevailing color being drab or fawn.

Each has its little front flower-garden, and these bordering the highway, with here and there a flour or lumber mill, two hotels, a distillery, one church, and the iron and zinc works, constitute the village.

The rest of the valley is divided into pasture, grain,

and corn-fields, by loose stone walls, breast high, running in diverse directions.

Confused by the echoes, and mellowed by distance, by day and by night are heard the hum of heavy machinery in motion, the muffled thump of the trip-hammer, crushing mineral ore; the ring of the sledge, fashioning the glowing "*lope*" or "*loop*," to be converted into massive anchors, and the dash of water over the dam, or the sides of revolving wheels.

Nearer, the babble and murmur of a multitude of rapid brooks, which thread the whole valley, narrowing and widening at intervals, at last mingling with the river four miles off, whose occasional sails are visible through a cleft of the mountains.

These streams all proceed from inexhaustible lakes, overhead, among the hills, which are themselves fed by innumerous springs.

Reader, we have taken you out of the dusty and in every way foul city—if it be your fate to inhabit the town—and descended with you into as beautiful and peaceful a spot as existed on earth this bright morning in June, of the year 186—

Will it continue so?

We shall see.

We will not leave you on the charming country road bordered with forest trees, which is the main street, when we can as readily enter "Millburn House," whose inmates you should know.

It is a courtesy most travellers, and all sojourners, show Father Millburn, the venerable proprietor, in whose honor the village was named, first to call upon him and listen a while, rather than talk, to the good old man.

His house, scarcely more pretentious than its neigh-

bors, is the last on the right of the road, at the foot of Bald Mountain; down which a furious cataract rushes, foaming between jagged rocks, and gurgles hollowly away under the one-arched stone bridge, which spans the road a few paces from his door.

The old man, seventy-six years of age, over six feet in height, with hair white as snow—or rather yellow with age, and rich, soft, and glossy as the silk of corn—is sitting on his porch, as usual, bareheaded, and leaning on his well-worn cane; warming himself in the mild beams of the morning sun.

He is nearly blind, yet can distinguish any one approaching or object interposed between him and the light, through that remarkable substituted sense born of his infirmity. He never fails to detect the stranger, or identify a friend.

He rises, after an apparent close scrutiny, salutes the approaching visitor in a loud, cheery voice, and invites to enter the house—or, is a seat preferred in the sunshine?

"Mammy has gone of an errand, and Blanche is putting things to rights up-stairs. She'll be down presently, and then if you will stop to breakfast, cook will have it ready. Mammy is a stupid old nigger, and there's no knowing when she'll get back—but she loves us—she loves us, and we can't do without her. We are used to seeing her around. She nursed Blanche and—and—all the others, now in heaven. They're all gone—all gone but Blanche and me, and old Mammy. But I'm not sorrowful—blessed be God for all his mercies—I've much to be thankful for. Blanche is a good child, and will never leave her old father."

Father Millburn here draws carefully out, from the

depth of his capacious waistcoat, an old-fashioned silver watch, without a crystal, and, fumbling the dial, glancing up at the sun the while, as though to inquire of that luminary and compare notes, remarks:

"Bless me, it is seventeen minutes after eight." Then, holding the watch out for inspection, "I have the advantage of you—you can't tell the time by this!"

One hand has the end broken off, and the old gentleman has made the accident subservient to his use, telling the time infallibly by the touch.

A figure here stumbles up, scarce, at first, distinguishable as human; possessing the graceful appearance and proportions of a moderate-sized feather bed, tied in the middle, bent nearly double, and enveloped in a neat ticking of striped gingham. On the upper end is a man's straw hat, tied down by a strip of rag over the crown.

This clumsy shape supports itself from falling by a short, stout, straight stick or cudgel, with which it makes irregular stabs at the earth, as though it were a floating bag and might escape. The hat is plucked off with a sort of camp-meeting jerk, and Mammy—for it is she—tumbles up three steps at a time, deposits the stick, the hat, and herself on the floor of the porch, with a flop, and exclaims, mopping her black, shining visage:

"Goramity, Marse Ambrose—it's drefful hard on dis ole nigger, an' she ain't gwine to stand it nohow—she gwine away, shure! Dar's a letter from de postis-office, an' now, Miss Blanche, she got to come an' help ole critter in wid dese here bundles, sartain.

"No she shan't, nudder, de darlin' little babby—she shan't do no sich ting—I take 'em in myself!"

Leaving the hat and cane outside, as though the precincts of the house were sacred, she gathered up the scat-

tered bundles, and courtesying and pulling her crispy white wool by way of "good-by," Mammy, who must be among the eighties, goes around, back of the house, to "see Miss Blanche."

But how describe Blanche Millburn?

> "Some angel guide my pencil while I draw
> What nothing else than angel can exceed."

Leaving the old man alone on the porch, in the material sunshine, awaiting the sound of the breakfast bell, and the kind offices of his daughter—who is the light of his eyes and sunshine of his soul—to acquaint him with the contents of the letter, which he has placed in his pocket-book to abide her leisure, we will enter the house.

The sounds of vigorous bustling overhead have ceased, and the rustling approach—not of rich summer silks, but of an unmistakable broom on the stairs, as the sweeper, step by step, descends, ushers in, in a manner exceedingly novel and admirable we are happy to think, the fair Blanche Millburn, the lily of the valley, as she is frequently called.

She differs from the Scriptural one to her advantage, inasmuch as she is both ornamental and useful.

Blanche is just eighteen. Tall, slender, and graceful. More like the stately pride of the floral kingdom, the garden lily.

Her morning dress is confined at the waist with cord and tassel; she wears no ornament, unless a plain linen collar and cuffs may be called such. Her faultless figure and exquisite taste are thereby exhibited to the best advantage.

Of this result was she conscious? Who was there likely to see her, except Mammy, or Lucy the cook, Mammy's grandchild?

Notwithstanding, her rich, dark tresses seemed looped and braided with uncommon care, and her large, fine eyes appeared somewhat restless and uneasy.

Did the circumstance that "father's breakfast" was an hour behindhand account for this?

Lucy, coming in to set the table, announced Mammy in the kitchen, and down-stairs flew our unpretending beauty to clasp in affectionate embrace the old black nurse, whose tender care of her infancy she was not sufficiently refined or fashionable to have forgotten.

"Goramity bless you, honey—deed an' deed is dis you? Why you is so big, ole Mammy'd hab to git up on de kitchen table to smoove an' comb your har, as I use to do ebery day ob your life, when you was sich a little piccaninny I could rock you to sleep in a punkin shell. Nebber mind, you is younger dan I is, honey. You'll hab to stoop down to ole Mammy, now—she's parse climbin' up, 'cept to glory when de Lord calls her, which it won't be long neider, honey; 'case I's bery ole, bress de Lord, I's bery ole."

In the midst of the old woman's prattle Blanche was summoned up-stairs.

The morning meal was ready—and a visitor had arrived.

"John has come over to breakfast with us, Blanche," announced her father, by way of explaining the presence of the guest.

"He is very kind and welcome," assented Blanche politely, smiling and inclining her head in salutation.

While they are discussing the abundant country feast spread on the snowy damask before them, we will discuss the visitor, for whom, it would appear, it had been thus delayed.

John Watt called himself a Cornish miner.

He is not refined, not polished, not educated apparently; at least no one had reason to suspect the contrary, or had said so concerning him.

Nor is he over polite on all occasions; nay, he is downright rude on some, which his powerful physique might serve to excuse as inevitable.

Though his occupation, for a short time, had been that of a miner, upon his first appearance in the valley, some years before, there was something about him which seemed to indicate that he had received gentler nurture than his occupation explained. In mining phrase, it cropped out all over the man.

He was about twenty-five or six years of age. Of stalwart height and proportions; and in breadth of shoulders and girth of chest he was an Hercules.

He had a handsome, well-raised forehead, well-shaped head, densely thatched with close-cropped jet-black hair, honest wide-open hazel eyes, shaded with thick lashes, and heavy arched brows, to match with a full beard of oriental luxuriance.

The nose, of accurate Grecian shape, with wide nostrils denoting passion and generosity, vouched for the perfection of the mouth and chin, hidden beneath its hirsute covering.

It is ignorance or prejudice—which is still ignorance—to assert that the presence of the beard has the effect to mar or destroy expression.

Every artist and anatomist knows that the facial lines are as completely defined by the curves which that appendage takes from the muscles beneath, as though no such mask intervened.

The passions have been delineated by the beard alone.

When John laughed you knew there were dimples about the mouth, just as evident to the physiognomist as those in Blanche's velvety chin, whose merry jest produced them.

But the old man, despite his assertion that he was not sorrowful, sat silent and abstracted, and ate nothing.

At length both Blanche and John noticed it, which the merry flow of the former's spirits hitherto had prevented.

While Blanche talked, John would have been deaf to the voice of Fate itself.

"Father, what is the matter with you? You did not ask a blessing, as you do at every meal. I have failed to win a smile from you, or even a look in my direction, where your dear old eyes are accustomed to turn every moment. Your coffee is untasted, and you have eaten nothing. I have noticed all the morning you are not quite like yourself. I fear the breakfast being so late has made you ill. You must forgive your lazy Blanche this time."

She did not say your sly, little, scheming, plotting, deceitful puss-in-boots of a Blanche.

Ah no! that would have been letting puss out of the bag. And perhaps, after all, she meant to give somebody "the sack."

The old man, half aroused by Blanche's address, mechanically withdrew the letter from his pocket-book, which, in the preoccupation of his mind, he had been clasping and unclasping in his lap, concealed by the table-cloth; and Blanche's quick eyes caught sight of the unopened letter, bearing the stamp of the New York office.

"Why, father, you have a letter there," she exclaimed.

"Does that annoy you? Give it to me; I see you are impatient to have the subject off your mind. I will acquaint you with the contents in a moment, and you can take your breakfast. Poor dear, you make me reproach myself more and more."

"Oh, no, no, no!" replied the old man, with manifest confusion, "another time, another time—after breakfast—it would not be polite to John."

"Never mind me, Father Millburn, never mind me—I'm nobody!" said John.

Blanche looked up quickly at him; but there was no covert acerbity in his fresh, honest face.

"Well," hesitated the old man, "you can look it over, and if it's important, tell me another time, not now."

It was passed to her by John, and, with the nonchalant business air with which she had opened many previous letters of insufficient consequence to be confided to her father's solicitor, Blanche withdrew a folded note from the envelope, and read to herself.

It was only three lines. But, as though the ink employed in the writing had been the deadly distillation of the Borgias, and, with the sight, the frightful poison had penetrated the brain through the optic nerve, she arose gasping, one hand extended as though for support, dropping the letter from the nerveless fingers of the other at the feet of John, and, as the room whirled round, and the world seemed leaving her in darkness, with drawn and livid lips, she cried out:

"Father! Victor—Victor is—" and fell, insensible, heavily to the floor.

The old man could see enough to comprehend, as he supposed, and the knowledge of his own secret, so long,

so well concealed from his daughter, led him to imagine the worst.

With a cry of anguish, like that of one stricken a mortal blow, he called aloud: "My God—my child—she knows—she knows all!" and sank back motionless in his chair.

His jaw fell, and his now quite sightless eyes were set, staring and glassy as those of a corpse.

CHAPTER II.

BESIEGED.

BOB REDFERN, better known as "Bachelor Bob," geologist, naturalist, taxidermist, mineralogist, botanist, artist, florist, and every other *ist*, was a verification of the adage, "Jack of all trades and master of none."

He was "an eccentric" to that degree he might safely have added to the multitude of his *ists* "the What-is't" without provoking further inquiry or curiosity.

Those hours which he did not pass locked and barred in his "studio," or "atelier," which he was vain enough to call his one unplastered room and garret, admitting to the mystery of his secret occupation therein only the north light and the boy, Beetle, he employed in excursions, accompanied by the same boy, and followed by a dog, in which he explored the intricacies of the surrounding country.

This boy, Beetle, was always followed by Grigg, another boy.

Who ever knew a boy to go anywhere alone when he might obtain the company of a satellite?

Bachelor Bob had a horror of "parsons and wimmin," as he irreverently termed the clergy and the fair sex.

This was unaccountable, as he was neither a naturally ill-favored nor evil-disposed person, unless habit explained it. *Per contra*, he was a perfectly harmless but unapproachable recluse.

Among his other curiosities he had at one time picked up "Rennard," as he called him, a vagabond yellow dog, so named in commemoration of the mistake which had nearly cost the animal his life, from Bob's leveled gun, as he was skulking away among the bushes, having approached his future master too closely, impelled by animal magnetism. The dog was unaware of his own close resemblance to the "pesky critter" he was so nearly taken for.

Shortly after, Bob picked up Beetle, a lost or purposely mislaid "babe in the woods," then scarcely a year old.

The child, nearly naked, was sprawling in the brush, and crowing with all his might, as he endeavored to detain and capture a huge black beetle, whose companion he already held in one fat fist, while he scrambled in pursuit of the demoralized mate.

The predilections of the infant had adhered to and developed in the boy.

What Beetle was for "bugs," Grigg was for eels, snakes, terrapins, toads, and all aquatic repulsions.

Grigg conceived a sneaking—not snaking—kindness for Beetle, and was accustomed to loiter in his wake, dodging behind corners, walls, trees and bushes, sometimes daring close approach, and at others hanging back

out of sight, with the vain hope of being painfully missed, and ultimately meeting with more encouragement.

Boys know better than men the weaknesses of human nature.

Instinct teaches them. We have left that behind, and reason misleads us.

How, and precisely when, all the parties in consideration ratified a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, would puzzle them and us to tell exactly. But the approach to it was thus:

Beetle was observed, at first, to be anxious to turn suddenly in some other direction than that contemplated in the outset. Or, he would walk very fast—almost on the run—begging "Uncle Redfern" to "hurry up, for that there place, where I seed that quare bug, was clean on t'other side o' Pimple Hill."

At such times he would wear a mingled expression of apprehension and desire of being followed by something or somebody, so manifest, that the sharp eye of the naturalist could not fail to perceive it.

Bachelor Bob sought the cause of this, and was rewarded with the privilege of bidding a terribly disconcerted little atomy, somewhat smaller than "his boy," to "git along home, you little vagabone—where the blazes you're coming to?—Here, Rennard!"

This, at first, was sufficient; but, as the boy who called "wolf" too often, when there was no wolf, was soon despised, so happened it to the man who called Reynard.

At other times Redfern detected Beetle emitting sly, shrill whistles, evident signals, when they were setting out together on expeditions. These were immediately answered by others, at less or greater distance, or suc-

ceeded by a glimpse of Grigg's tiny, superannuated, monkey phiz, cautiously projected and withdrawn beyond the outline of a neighboring rock, or corner, bridge or tree.

In brief, Bob realized that Beetle had contracted a sincere and natural childish friendship. Notwithstanding his often asserted sentiment, "Two's company and three's a crowd," he found that his affection for his protegé disposed him to relent.

Reynard never watched his master's face with sharper intelligent scrutiny than Grigg did the same countenance. This last occasion was his flood-tide. He perceived, took it, and was led on to fortune, with passport in hand, as follows:

"Mister Redfern, sir; I axes pardon, but I've brought you the curious-est ribbon snake I ever knowed, and there's another thing there, where I cotch it, beats this one all hollow. I was 'feard of it, but you could catch it easy, Mister Redfern. I'll show you where it is."

Bravo! Grigg.

The citadel surrendered, and the two boys indulged in an expressive grin as the portcullis was lowered.

"You're a good boy. Come along with us. What's your name, sonny?"

Grigg was thenceforth installed, and proved not the least zealous or useful contributor to the humble interests of science.

Now for the *personnel* of this provincial society.

Bachelor Bob was forty-five. A little over the medium height. Had, originally, a Roman nose, lately degenerating into the style called "hook," caused partly by age and partly by the loss of one or two—not to say more—front teeth. Which loss, he says, was occasioned

by the habit of biting "kettridges," "ontying knots," and so on.

He stooped somewhat from the middle, and had grown round-shouldered to the degree of spinal curvature termed "Bible-back," despite his aversion to the clergy.

He possessed another religious feature, in the shape of a complete tonsure, like that of a monk; being perfectly bald on the top of his head, and revealing a thick border or rim of very straight, coarse hair around the base of the skull, in approved monastic style.

His sight—through small, gray, twinkling eyes, one of which was half closed, or squinting, from the habit of sighting along the barrel of his gun—was perfect.

His costume—consisting of a black slouch felt hat, brown cassimere coat with metal buttons, and gray trousers, winter and summer the same—although of good material and make, fitted his person as a sailor's undergarment is supposed to fit a handspike.

He was careless, awkward, taciturn, slovenly and altogether out of gear, as nine out of ten men are sure to become, either in dress, manners or morals—often in all—who have reached forty years of age without ever having married.

Whatever may be alleged against matrimony, it cannot be denied that "it humanizes one so."

Well—such was Bachelor Bob.

He couldn't talk to a woman with any pretensions to being considered a lady, to save his life, and would run farther and faster to avoid such than from the fiercest wild beast of forest or mountain. All his presence of mind forsook him if suddenly encountered by a young unmarried female.

He was either struck dumb altogether, or broke out in a cold perspiration, and stammered and fidgeted until he could make his escape from the fearful propinquity.

Reynard it is unnecessary to describe. He was a big yellow dog, and yellow dogs are mainly alike. He had the additional misfortune to attach himself to an old bachelor, and, if he had not contracted all his master's ideas and habits, had acquired somewhat the same general appearance. He was an untidy, mangy, often surly dog, but could be pleased by the judicious presentation of "a sop to Cerberus."

Beetle was now about twelve years old, and would have been a pretty boy, had he not associated too much with his Uncle Redfern.

The consequence was, his thick mop of brown hair, which looked like a scratch wig, hung straight down over his eyes, almost rendering problematical the existence of those important organs. His clothes were generally torn and stained; the buttons, especially where most needful and important, were always missing. His hat usually slouched down one side, that he might resemble "the bold buccaneer" in the story book. Seven out of his ten toes protruded from his shoes, faithfully and punctually two weeks after said articles were brought home to him, new, from the maker.

Grigg would capture and secure all horrid monstrosities in the water line, hand them over to Redfern and have done with it.

Not so with Beetle. He had a passion for carrying, in unsuspected pockets, and producing on the shortest notice—or without any—on the most unsuitable occasions which could possibly be selected, grass-snakes, pinching-bugs, rear-horses. terrapins, and craw-fish—

which last he would borrow from Grigg, as the land afforded nothing so "awful funny" in his estimation.

These he would drop on parlor carpets, in church aisles, under dinner tables, in Sunday-school, under pianos—wherever he was admitted, in fact, and that was everywhere. For, although he was a most mischievous urchin and intolerable nuisance in such ways, he was a brave, bright, kind-hearted, generous, manly little rascal, and an universal favorite.

Grigg was a sniggering little, red-headed, freckle-faced imp, who adored Beetle and laughed at all his tricks.

Therefore, and because he himself was affectionate and brave, and it was his nature to protect, Beetle loved Grigg.

Miss Clotilda Spinner, the old maid *par excellence*, had a pious horror of the boys, especially Beetle; only equalled by her doting admiration for Mr. Robert Redfern.

Upon him she manifestly had designs, and proposed—when he should propose—to "take him in hand and reform him altogether."

It is probable her scheme of regeneration did not embrace Beetle in any manner, shape, or form.

Thus far Heaven had seemed to reward the kind old bachelor for his humanity to this otherwise waif and estray, who, by his presence at all times with Redfern, was unconsciously made his "uncle's" guardian angel against the tender machinations of Clotilda Spinner.

What demon of mischief, or envious fate was it then, suggested to Bob that, by sending Beetle to the apothecary's for a pint of alcohol, to preserve entomological specimens—a new supply of which fluid was regularly needed on every occasion of an excursion, and as regu-

larly smelled, aye and tasted, like brandy—that he might save time thereby.

He could occupy that period, he thought, in looking after his garden, regulating his "studio," putting former collections of plants and insects through the first process of "preparing" them. He could skin, stuff, or mount a bird.

All that would then remain to be done would be, to equip himself with gun, hammer, satchel, etc., bar and bolt his den, and set out immediately with the boys on their arrival.

Beetle was despatched with the flask and the price of the purchase, with the usual strict injunctions to "go straight there and straight home again"—which he invariably disregarded.

Grigg followed Beetle, Reynard brought up the rear.

There's no doubt about it that, since the advent of Grigg, Reynard showed marked preference for the boys.

Bachelor Bob had satisfied himself, over and over, that nothing more remained to be done in and about the "Atelier." He had picked dead leaves off the plants and flowers in the little patch of ground before the door. Within he had "touched up" an oil painting or two, here and there, representing remarkable fruits, flowers, birds, fish, or insects. He had dusted his cabinet of minerals, bugs, and coins; not forgetting his pet and grotesquely arranged collection of the memorable seventeen year locust or cicada. He had even fixed his movable ladder by which he ascended to his eyry—the garret—where he and Beetle slept, and reconnoitred the entire premises within, finding everything safe. With patience quite exhausted, he stepped in front of the door, for the twentieth time, to see if the boys were yet in sight.

Not a bit of it. But—in an opposite direction—not an hundred yards off—horror of horrors—the green cotton umbrella of Miss Clotilda Spinner.

As the huge parachute swung from side to side—the motion caused by the feminine weakness of her wrist, whose strained sinews were perceptible even at that distance—the identity of that tall, tight-laced, attenuated figure could never for a moment be mistaken by Bob, who had successfully dodged it for the previous five years.

There was no attributing that infantile pan-cake, butter-dish, lamp-mat of a hat, set sliding down toward the sharp, red, frosty point of that pinched nose to any other wearer than Clotilda.

He would have sworn to the little, hard, thin, yellow ball of hair, tied behind with a black shoe-string, the tin ends depending, as ornaments; which desolate, arid promontory Miss Spinner gushingly called her "waterfall."

A rocky waterfall it was. A waterfall, which, alas, no beaux invested, save their namesakes in ribbon on her hat.

In an instant, like the fearful mental retrospect said to precede dissolution, he recalled Clotilda's "lily-white," rouged cheeks, her green-persimmon-puckered mouth, like a venomous stab with a hacked tea-knife in a half-done blackberry pie—which had never previously received a dimple from the prongs of the fork. The thin, blue lips receding, reveal the filling—in the shape of fangs verdigrised with verjuice and venom.

Unhappily, Clotilda delighted in gossip, scandal and slander. It was the only resource of her lonely state, which is all the plea I have to offer in her behalf.

Of course it was not requisite for one so extremely young to wear spectacles, but suspended from her long, skinny neck, by a long, thin, "dollar-jewelry" chain, was a near-sighted eye-glass.

Before she could adjust this to those pale orbs, of which

"The cat has twa the very color,"

her fell object, that she was seeking him—that she was about "to drop in on him"—to "have him out of that," etc.; as she was reported to have threatened on divers occasions; flashed upon the bewildered intellect of the old bachelor just in time—just in time.

He made one agile bound in the midst of his curiosity shop, before he had been at all perceived—gained the foot of his ladder—climbed up, with the celerity of a belated lamplighter of the olden time, or Robinson Crusoe pursued by savages, and similarly hauled the ladder up after him. Here he threw himself on his bed—a pile of skins of beasts—and with bated breath and heart beating like a catapult he awaited the *denouement*.

The "kangaroo-jump," rather than foot-fall, on her high-heeled gaiters, grew more appallingly audible, and the "Grecian-bend" of the divine Clotilda violated the sanctity of that gravel path no feminine step had ever traversed before.

He heard her enter that door he had had no time to close after him. He heard that little gasp of fatigue, more frightful to his apprehension than the shriek in his ear of an unexpected express locomotive. That finicky, asthmatic cough, followed by the terribly familiar, piping, vinegary tones of her ejaculation,

"Gone out—and left his filthy kennel wide open!

But, thank my stars, I've got in at last, and I'll stay here till he comes home, if I wait—if I wait—till doomsday!"

CHAPTER III.

THE UNKNOWN GUEST.

WE left Blanche Millburn in a swoon upon the floor of her father's dwelling, and we have seen the effect on the old man of that strange cry, arrested in its utterance by the fainting-fit caused by the contents of the mysterious letter.

Failing in his effort to prevent Blanche from falling with cruel violence, as he leaned over her insensible form, John perceived the open letter lying at his feet, and as a measure of precaution hastily thrust it in a pocket of his coat.

John Watt was just the man for emergencies. It needed extraordinary occasions to bring him out in full feather, and it must have been some exceptional excitement which had started his beard so vigorously, and produced such a magnificent growth of whisker.

It appeared difficult to arouse the energies of that cool, calm, lethargic temperament; but the call of humanity could do it at any time, let alone the tender sentiment, and here both were agitating that big, generous heart at the same time.

Aunt Lucy had heard the scream and fall, and had entered the room. With the rapidity of thought

John threw off his coat, folded it hastily with the buttons on the inside, and placed it gently under Blanche's head.

Then he ran to Father Millburn, and lifting him from the chair, whence he was in danger of falling, carried him with the ease and solicitude of a mother conveying her sick child and disposed him comfortably on the cushioned lounge near the open window.

Neither water nor vinegar sprinkled or inhaled serving to restore them at once, he rang for Lucy, and rushed to the front door to obtain a messenger for the doctor.

At that instant two boys were passing the house leisurely playing at the game of marbles called "long-taw;" accompanied by a yellow dog which took part in the sport by running at each taw as it was shot, snatching it up in his mouth and capering away, till forced to drop it at the laughing command of the boys.

"Here, come here, both of you!" shouted Watt.

They ran up to him immediately.

The yellow dog—who had not perceived the new turn of affairs—scudded up the street with both marbles in his mouth, in high glee, thinking the boys were close behind his stump-tail in hot pursuit.

"Go for Dr. Daws, as fast as you can run, and ask him to come here right away. Not to wait for his buggy—it's a case of life and death. Here's a quarter and you shall have another when he arrives. What's that in your hand?"

Without further word, John snatched a flask out of Beetle's hand—of course it was he—pulled out the cork with his teeth—smelled it—tasted it—exclaimed, "All right—just the thing—I'll take charge of this!" and be-

fore the boy could expostulate was gone in the house, bidding them "Fly now—fly! be off!"

The short time which must elapse before the physician could put in an appearance was occupied by John in a manner, which, under other circumstances, would have afforded him inexpressible rapture.

A portion of the brandy was given to each of the patients, and by virtue of his strength it was John's privilege to lift the light form of Blanche, all unconscious as she was, and carry her in his arms up the back staircase to her chamber.

As a faithful discreet chronicler, I will not say that the poor fellow rewarded himself a thousand times over by giving the idolized burthen one long, unnecessary pressure at the first turn of the stairs, and another as he relinquished the same, and disposed her tenderly upon her couch, whose snowy sheets were scarcely whiter than her pallid face.

However that may be, it is undoubtedly true that never in the whole course of his life had his heart beat so tumultuously—quite enough for two—against that unresponsive one he would have given the whole world to have awakened to one transient pulsation of reciprocal tenderness.

But, alas! it could never be. It was too evident she loved another.

Resuming his coat in the dining-room, having left Blanche above in care of Mammy and her grandchild, while he awaited the doctor, he took out the letter which he had thrust all crumpled up in his pocket.

Not without some twinges of conscience, though feeling himself exonerated by all the circumstances of the case, and additionally impelled by anxiety, John possessed himself of the contents, as follows:

"WALL STREET, NEW YORK,
"*June* 10, 186—.

"AMBROSE MILLBURN, ESQ.:

"DEAR SIR—Victor returned from Europe yesterday. He leaves to-night for Millburn, empowered to treat with you *in a certain affair*.

"Yours truly,
"C. C. FORESTAL."

"So"—muttered John, while his brow grew dark and a deep inspiration heaved his broad chest.

"So—Victor is *home*—is he? *That* was what Blanche could not announce; fainting with the shock of surprise and joy. He parts with her for seven years, and comes back in less than two.

"Comes back for what? To treat with Father Millburn in *a certain affair*. What can *that* mean?

"I wonder if his father has changed his mind, and recalled the wild youth; thinking that a lovely wife and sixty miles of mineral land for his son, with everything under his own supervision, may not be the worst speculation a Wall street broker ever engaged in, after all? and Blanche—"

Here a hurried ring of the door-bell, followed by the quick, light step of Dr. Daws, interrupted poor John's lugubrious soliloquy.

"What's the matter here—who's dead? Ah!" thus the doctor.

A few words from John, as the kind physician felt the old man's pulse, and examined his countenance, acquainted him with the whole occurrence.

"What, and Blanche too! God bless my soul, why didn't you say so at once?"

In a moment the doctor was half-way up the stairs, with a step as though shod with felt, and agile as a dancing-master's, whence he returned in a few moments, with an open vial in his hand, saying: "All right—only a fainting fit—getting better already—soon be well—needs nursing—must be kept quiet—hysterics—must have cheerful company—now for the old man!" All this in a breath.

Whatever the contents of the vial were, a few drops poured down the wide-open mouth of Father Millburn caused him to reverse the order of things by closing his mouth, shutting his eyes, and emitting a low groan.

"Well done—hey—feel better—can't answer—will presently—must have a nurse here—send Rosa—both nurse and company—send her round!"

In the same fragmentary but perfectly intelligible style the doctor directed further restoratives for both, and that the old man should be put to bed forthwith, wrote a prescription, and concluded his visit with this speech:

"Must shake hands, Watt—fine fellow—big as a giant—step like a lady—should be a doctor—knows what he's about—no danger now—send Rosa around—call again in an hour—got the prescription?—good-by!" And he was gone.

We hate description, and will spare our readers all we can, but *some* is important and inevitable.

Dr. Daws was of the old *régime*. A little over the medium height, inclined to stoop, about sixty years old, florid face, big, full nose, rather inclined to purple blossoms from good food and good wine, which he enjoyed in abundance, yet never to the extent of impairing his nice judgment, and recommended wherever he thought *safe*.

His head was large, red as his face, and bald, with many protuberances showing strong individuality.

Among his bumps benevolence, philoprogenitiveness, combativeness, reverence, ideality, mathematics, and tune, must have been enormously developed, and made an extraordinary compound of character. While self-esteem was a cavity, a vacuum, which his nature abhorred.

He had attended all the births for ten miles around during the last thirty years, and considered himself justly the father of the inhabitants, conducting himself accordingly.

He wore gold spectacles, took snuff immoderately, from a tortoise-shell box, which he liberally sprinkled over his ruffled-shirt front, and as its use was without intermission, he commonly carried it in one hand, while his heavy gold-headed cane engaged the other.

He wore a white beaver hat, blue cloth dress-coat, with bright brass buttons, heavy fob-chain and seals, with nankeen vest and pantaloons.

His boots shone like a mirror, and his hands, which he invariably washed before approaching a patient, if time allowed, were white and soft as a lady's. His voice was rich and unctuous, slightly accentuated with snuff.

London or Paris could not furnish, in one individual, greater scientific or professional attainments than the doctor possessed, and freely devoted to the service of his patients, rich and poor alike, without a thought of reward.

They could pay him or not, just as they pleased. Able or unable, willing or unwilling, it was all the same to him. He was never known to send in a bill, nor was one ever made out for his services. Fortunately his private circumstances were independent of his practice.

He was more often found, by the hour, in the hovels of the poor than in the mansions of the wealthy. He was in universal demand, and it was currently believed that many of his patients would rather die, or at least risk it, than call another physician when Dr. Daws could not be obtained. Fortunately Providence and the doctor kept the community wonderfully healthy, or he could not have survived the wear and tear of such extensive practice.

Blanche was up again, though very pale and weak, seated in her rocking-chair, before John Watt left the house, half an hour after the doctor.

He had previously received, through Aunt Lucy, a message from Miss Blanche, full of thankful gratitude and almost sisterly warmth. He went away like one wounded, but comforted, in the cause of the woman he loved. Her thanks, and the chaste emotions her contact had enkindled glowing in his heart, and his rival's letter rankling like a dagger in his breast, where he had thrust it on the appearance of the doctor.

Beetle, who was spinning top outside with Grigg, got his extra quarter, and an additional dime-note from the doctor, to convey a message from him to Rosa Moss, at her Uncle Jobson's, to the effect that Father Millburn was ill, and Blanche needed her services.

"Jehoshaphat—Jerusalem-crickets—elephant-pot-pie!" exclaimed that original genius, as he set out at his usual irregular pace for his new destination—"sixty cents a day, and can't be found!"

But Rosa was readily found, engaged in clearing away the remains of the evening meal, of which her uncle and a young yet weather-scarred "shipmate" of his had evidently partaken.

Both men were similarly clad, in a half-landsman half-maritime costume.

One corner of the table had been cleared, and upon this, between them, stood a big, square, suggestive black bottle, a screw of strong tobacco, and a couple of dingy, short clay-pipes.

The unknown was, at the moment of the delivery of Beetle's message, employed in cramming a wad of the tobacco he had crumbled in his left palm into the bowl of the pipe which lay next him.

On hearing its purport, he sprang hurriedly to his feet, as though to be off at once.

His motive Jobson seemed to divine—for he quickly forced him down again, in the rustic flag-chair he occupied, saying: "Belay there, shipmet—that won't do nohow! Let puss here go and take obserwations, and she'll give you all the bearings quick as a quadrant."

This appearing good advice and convincing, the stranger resumed his seat, lighted his pipe, and smoked vigorously as though to allay his nervous anxiety.

"Now Rose, my flower," said Jobson, turning a look of proud tenderness on his niece, "jest put on yer panama—poor child, it's the only ma yer got, now, 'xcept me—never mind, honey, don't look so down-like—jest put on yer thingumbobs, and see what's the matter with ther Admiral, and don't say a word about who's here for all the world—not for all the world, d'ye mind.

"If Miss Blanche axes any questions, and I don't think she will—she ain't that kind, she's a rale lady—don't you go for to tell her which way ther cat jumps by letting on bout 'strangers' and such like, for she's sartin to inquire arter Jeems Jobson, you knows that."

"If you say *anything*, Rose, tell her your uncle has company—an old shipmate, name Marlin—that'll do," said the unknown.

CHAPTER IV.

A WOLF IN THE FOLD.

ABOUT the hour of sunset, or rather,

"'Twixt the gloaming an' the mirk,
When the kye come hame,"

all the inhabitants of the village were on the *qui vive* for one of the two grand events of each day—the arrival and departure of the mail-coach. Now its arrival was momently expected.

Simeon Simples, the apothecary, was standing in the door of his cigar-box of a shop, opposite the handsome residence of Dr. Daws, looking abstractedly now up the road, now on the blue and red show-bottles in his one window, and then upon the red light lingering in the western horizon, the effect of which, in his sandy hair and thin, spidery side-whiskers, and on his cadaverous visage, causing him to blink his weak blue eyes more than common, quite savored of the spectacular drama—red, white, and blue lights.

At the village post-office, where they keep the bank, sell candy, shoes, calicoes, agricultural implements, and rat-traps, Squire Waters, the Dutch justice of the peace, is talking with Knob Wallis, the constable; each keeping an eye on the hill by which the coach is to arrive.

Near the door of the village church, with its wooden spire, its grove of locust trees, and little grave-yard, where

"The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep,"

is collected a group, most incongruous in themselves, yet in keeping with the scene.

These are the Rev. Dr. Wedlock, the pastor, and his wife, Grimes, the undertaker, and Grub, the grave-digger, father of our little acquaintance Grigg; the friend of Beetle and the yellow dog.

They are probably conferring about matters of a grave interest, yet each is cognizant of the signs of life around.

But by far the most directly and practically interested personage in the whole village came to the door of the spacious house opposite, and leaned far out in his impatience to see farther up the mountain road, as he had, previous to our observing him, done fifty times before. This was Todd, the tavern-keeper, or Colonel Todd, as his neighbors called him. Every man in America who "can keep a hotel" or save a dollar is brevetted Colonel (Whiskey Colonels), and his *steady* customers, Judges—of good liquor.

"Here, you Bill! Bill Curry, look alive there—here she comes! Don't she, Gin?"

Thus the landlord—first to the hostler, and afterwards to Jennie Spry, the chambermaid, who was keeping a bright look out from the third-story window.

"'Deed an' 'deed an' she do, kernel, an' you kin bet yer bottom dollar on that, ole hoss! Loaded down to the ground too—five trunks an' a cyarpet-bag on behin' —a whole lot o' traps on top, nine inside and six outside, 'ithout counting the driver."

This from Jennie, who nearly fell out of the window in her eagerness while counting.

"What the devil are you staring at, fellow? Mind your own business, and let Gin mind her'n! Have you got your relays all ready?"

This sudden objurgation caused Bill to scratch his carroty poll, full of bits of straw and here and there ornamented with a stray chicken feather, color up violently, and alter the angle at which he had been nolding his head, to the manifest detriment of his neck, that he might see Jennie.

I am not absolutely certain myself—but the clergyman's wife, who, by the way, is a notorious gossip, busybody, and match-maker (most of which she mars), who was intently watching opposite, solemnly declares that they did—I am not certain, but am inclined to think it probable that, just at the moment of this interruption, Jennie Spry and Bill Curry were interchanging meaning looks—and—winks.

I am ashamed of Jennie if this be so—for it is not like her sex.

It was a busy, bustling city-like scene for a short while.

Trunks were shouldered into the hall, unbadged volunteer porters making their first appearance from the bar-room for that purpose, like supernumeraries from the side scenes of a theatre, for the right of entry therein.

Of the arrivals all had dispersed, about the house, or gone to their destinations in the village, save and except one.

This young gentleman—for *gentleman* was written in every lineament of his features, look, tone, gesture, and

movement of his body, in Chesterfieldan characters—nay, even his apparel partook of—or had imparted to it by the wearer—the insensible-exhaled atmosphere of his person.

This gentleman stood about five feet ten or eleven inches high in his bright polished, French calf-skin boots; small, soft and neat-fitting enough to be converted into gloves for a less fastidious person.

Handsome would not express the attractions with which nature, in her most bountiful and enamored mood, had endowed him.

He was perfect. About two or three and twenty years of age, with the face and form of an Apollo.

He had large, dark, deep, intellectual eyes, whose expression and even color changed with the varying emotions and moods of his fertile brain.

His nose was as accurate and perfect in outline and curve from its first bold start from his finely developed marble forehead to its termination at the base of the proud, defiant nostrils—the infallible indication of the human thoroughbred.

The lashes of his eyes were long, thick and sweeping; conveying expression in themselves, when the languid or flashing orbs within were sought to be concealed.

His eyebrows were twin arches, as perfect as a master-painter might project and essay, and destroy a dozen attempts, before he could accomplish the regularity with which each particular hair thereof fell into that curve which was the exact line of beauty.

He wore no other beard than a moustache; small, jet-black and glossy, trained and cultivated with the nicest taste and judgment, which just allowed the mouth, the thin upper and richer, fuller under lip, to be seen.

His small teeth, like ivory, of beautiful shape and without blemish, shone like a gleam of light between those lips formed like the fabled bow of the blind god.

A dimple appeared just above the chin, where would have grown the "imperial," had he worn any. The chin was full, well-rounded, firm-set, with a broad sweep, denoting force of character.

The head in development—especially in the regions of ideality or imagination, constructiveness, form, tune, color, language, etc., was that of a genius—a poet, and that of the very highest order.

In other organs, such as veneration or reverence, sensuality, covetousness and combativeness, too much and too little developed might be descried the faults of his character—did such exist.

I am no disciple of Gall or Spurzheim, and merely use their terms to convey my meaning to others, who may, perhaps, thus better comprehend.

This classical and beautiful head was covered with a profusion of short, clustering curls, without particular order, and suggesting no other impression than the fact that they were entirely and naturally so produced and arranged.

His valet scarcely needed to touch this incomparable head, which was proudly placed on a neck as snowy as a woman's, smooth, round and resolute as a gladiator's.

For the rest a broad yet elegant chest—not seeming so expanded as it actually was—a small waist the curve to and from which was faultless—strong, firm hips, and exquisitely shaped lower limbs and arms; feet and hands marvellously small and shapely—made a *tout ensemble*, the like of which I have never seen but once in my life.

I have been thus particular to be accurate; for incred-

ible as it may seem, the counterpart to this admirable Crichton actually did exist, and I have known him.

Neither are the events in which he figures at all overdrawn.

Literally, in every particular, *our story may be true.*

It is unnecessary to describe his costume; for one of his foibles seemed to be, not vanity—he was too well bred to have that appear—but love of dress; the extent of his wardrobe and the variety of his changes, all elegant, soon procured for him, among the better class of villagers, the designation of "The Man of Taste."

Shown to the best room by Jennie Spry, carrying in her hand the only wax candle of the establishment, he soon emerged therefrom clothed in a velveteen coat with light vest, pantaloons and necktie, and as he walked towards the bar-room, with firm but soundless step, fastened the button of a Couvaisser brown kid glove, which fitted exquisitely his miniature left hand.

The other glove he carried lightly in his right hand, the little finger of which was adorned with a solitaire diamond ring of immense value.

Jennie Spry was, I am sorry to say, loitering about the passages—she could not leave the spot where she had lost sight of him; certainly nothing so dazzling had ever before crossed her line of vision.

He called her to him, with a voice that haunted her dreams that night, and informing her he "had forgotten something," made known to her what that something was by suddenly yet gently passing that soft velvet sleeve about her waist, and just as suddenly pressing a velvet kiss on her saucy lips.

It was too bad.

However, the result was Jennie Spry would scarcely

notice Bill Curry after, on the score that he "had made Kernel Todd blow her up in the third story window."

"The Man of Taste" then entering the bar-room invited all the company, which was numerous and thirsty, to "take a julep and a cigar with him," which as they did so filled them with astonishment, and with everlasting gratitude—that is as long as the stimulating fumes of the liquor and tobacco endured.

When this most unusual hospitality was repeated, as it was shortly—always including "toddy for Todd," which was the landlord's call—he was voted to be "the prince of good fellows," "and a tip-top heavy swell."

One sapient individual, who being drunk was thought inspired, amazed himself and struck conviction to the hearts of the company by swearing, after the individual alluded to had left the room, "you couldn't fool him—he knowed who it was, and no mistake—it was Albert Ed'ard's brother, Prince Arthur of Ingland."

Well, it *might* have been for the matter of that—only never saw I royal personage comparable in any respect to "The Man of Taste."

Colonel Todd soon settled all conjecture in the easiest and most natural way in the world.

In his most insinuating manner, when he found his guest, he suggested the custom of his house, and the advantage on all sides of a traveller's registering himself.

To this there was no demur or hesitation, and soon old Todd's book was graced with the following entry—"Victor Forestal—New York City."

"And now, landlord," said the polite owner of the elegant name just recorded, "give me the best saddle-horse in your stables—no hack now, mind; I feel like a dash of a mile or two up the valley."

He was obeyed with alacrity; the influence of wealth wit, and beauty is almost omnipotent.

Springing, without effort, from the ground into the saddle, without aid of the stirrup, with a light but firm hand on the bridle, he made in an instant, as he had made the vulgar company he had quit, the nobler animal he bestrode know him for a master, and fly to do his bidding.

With a gay laugh to Jennie, showing his white teeth, he was off across the country like a shot.

Whither?

CHAPTER V.

ROUTED.

CLOTILDA SPINNER having waited a considerable time, and rested almost long enough to get the kink out of her backbone, occasioned by the practice of the "Grecian bend and kangaroo jump," both of which she had contracted badly, and had the honor of first introducing at Millburn, rose from the chair where she had thrown herself, fatigued with her journey, and proceeded to make a careful examination and inventory of Bachelor's Hall.

She had completed the circuit of the room several times, as well as her immense hoopskirts would permit, occasionally giving a little gasp, or screech, in proportion to the shock her nervous system received at the sight of stuffed alligators, small animals, snakes, toads, lizards, and other reptiles; not forgetting those seemingly swim-

ming about in glass jars and bottles of muddy spring water.

Nor the seventeen-year locusts, which she was morally convinced were alive, and would fly or jump at her were they not prevented by the pins on which they were providentially impaled.

She was filled with admiration, however, of Bob Redfern's oil paintings of birds, flowers, and fruits, and imitations of the grain of various woods.

His mineralogical specimens and coins did not much interest her, except in a few instances where little metallic specks glistening suggested they might be gold, and valuable, and possibly there was more where that came from.

During this leisurely exploration of the determined, the tender, yet unconscious Clotilda, poor Bob lay in mortal terror in the loft, afraid to stir, on far more pins and needles, so to speak, than all his bugs and locusts put together.

More than all Pharaoh's would have required had they been captured.

How was this thing to end? To add to his agony he had taken cold, fording brooks in the mountains after night, on his last excursion, and he felt an awful conviction that he was going to sneeze.

He might as well put his head down the hatchway and call Clotilda, as sneeze.

That little indulgence of his—a hearty sneeze—he had cultivated, as he had his flowers, and had brought to a very high degree of perfection, indeed.

He rather prided himself upon it as a personal characteristic, by which he could make his proximity known on occasion, when speaking was not convenient or advisable.

And it was such. Bob Redfern's sneeze was as well known to the echoes of Millburn hills as the bark of his yellow dog, or the whistle of "that ojus Beetle."

He must not sneeze, if he smothered; so he crammed the hairy skin of the robe he was lying on so imprudently down his dusty throat as to save himself, by the skin of his teeth, from a violent fit of coughing, which was just as bad.

Then he knew—yes, he knew he was getting the hiccoughs. If that occurred, worse than the Philistines, the Clotilda, "was upon him."

He never could stop hiccoughing, if it once began, under half an hour, and the paroxysm would "raise the roof," in two senses.

He was losing his head amid these apprehensions, and in his desperation thought of leaping down the chasm in the presence of his infernal deity, the wild animals' skins enveloping form and features, and with frightful Indian yells either scare her soul out of her body, or that soul and body off his premises.

Clotilda was given to thinking aloud, and all this time had been far from entertaining him with left-handed compliments on the subject of his personal attractions, with various further conjectures of her own he would rather, and so would she, he had not heard.

She commented on his "laziness," his "vagabondism," his "filthy habits," his "talents," and what she could and would make of him, winding up with, "only let me catch him—just let me lay hands on him."

It was horrible—it was awful. "My God! is this illness—delirium—am I dying?" thought poor Bob, as his torment became wholly unendurable.

Just at this point Beetle, accompanied by the yellow

dog—Grigg had gone to see his father—was stealing towards the house, like a truant boy returning to school, making a mighty careful reconnoissance as he advanced, fearful that Uncle Redfern was lying in wait for him around some angle of the house.

Though Bob was never too severe or cruel with him, yet he was a strict disciplinarian, and punished all disobedience of orders.

Beetle therefore, like a prudent wood-ranger, as he was, crept up very stealthily, and meeting no one as yet, became emboldened. Leaping on an old wooden bench near the door he peeped cautiously in the window.

He took in the whole situation at a glance, at least to this extent.

The enemy was in possession, but the commander of the fortress had not yet capitulated, or been made prisoner.

Love and sorrow for his uncle quickened his intellect, and the spirit of mischief, never far away, immediately suggested a plan to harass, if not rout, the foe, and rescue the beleaguered garrison.

Beetle's campaign was thus carried out.

After a hurried examination of his receptacles for ammunition, and finding his supplies sufficient, and on hand, he made a silent detour to the rear of the house. Stealing up on tiptoe to the open window, near which the patient Clotilda was again seated, he adroitly dropped a particularly active and lively pinching-bug between the muslin kerchief, covering her chaste shoulders, and her parchment skin; at the same moment silently letting fall a large marble-bag full of similar healthy specimens behind her chair.

The string having been loosened, with a view to their

escape, the whole collection dispersed instanter in all directions over the floor, their advance guard coming full in her view at the exact critical moment selected for attack by the enemy concealed in the rear, which had advanced about half-way down the path thus opened to it before a fair field offered for that purpose.

The venomous forceps of the intruder met in the shrinking flesh, and its multitudinous legs were spraddled out to give it a sure purchase for a good, hearty tug, at the instant she beheld its marauding comrades scampering over the floor, over her feet, and clambering like a boarding party of minute diabolical jack-tars, hand over hand, up the sides of her dress into her very lap.

A leap, a flutter of all her garments, which snapped the fastenings of her hoop-skirt, and deposited it in a state of collapse about her feet, accompanied by an unearthly scream, which caused Bob to bump his head violently against the rafters of the room above, so terribly was he startled, proclaimed the signal success of sortie No. 1.

Her frantic efforts to get at the precise *locale* of the ambuscade party resulted in a frightful destruction of whale-bone, corset-lacings, hooks and eyes, and all the paraphernalia of pinchbeck beauty.

Under less exciting circumstances Clotilda couldn't have done it to save her life. The suppleness of youth was exhibited—and more—in the activity with which she mounted the tall desk, upon which stood the capacious glass cases containing all Redfern's minerals.

The one who now made it her refuge surpassed in singularity every other fossil it displayed.

Here, with that determination which characterized her, she proceeded to repair damages.

"Go she wouldn't—no, not if fiery dragons and *spinxes* was to up an' say, 'begone, Clotilda!'"

Beetle, the boy Beetle, was so far unsuspected. This was the happiest hour of his life. A brilliant conception struck him at this point.

A fox's brush—the spoils of a famous hunt in the neighborhood—long, fresh and glossy as the day it had been severed from the captured animal, had been carefully preserved by Redfern. Beetle knew it was deposited on a high shelf near the window.

Clotilda, with her back towards him, was still close enough to that window, and to him, for his purpose.

With cat-like skill and caution he possessed himself of the pasteboard box containing it, and slyly and firmly tied it behind to the skirt of the unconscious maiden.

Next he drew with difficulty from the breast of his jacket, his favorite—his bosom companion, a vicious, but beautiful brown and striped ground-squirrel, secured by a long string to his wrist.

As the nature and propensities of this timid, tenacious, penetrating and nestling little quadruped presented themselves to the recollection of Beetle, he could hardly keep from shouting with delight at the notion of what he intended.

Even now the weasel-like "varmint" had worked itself at least twice around his body beneath the jacket, exploring every new channel which presented itself.

It would go down first one sleeve and then the other, peeping out at the wrists, and going back again, as though daylight was by no means what it wanted; at last taking refuge close under the arm-pit as it could get, whence the attempt was a little dangerous to dislodge it. Its teeth were ready and sharp as a rat's.

Beetle very cautiously dropped this creature beyond arm's length from himself. and just at the feet of the almost reassured Clotilda.

Holding on to the other end of the string he waited, as Guy Fawkes would have awaited the result of his having touched off that historical slow-match.

One whisk of its tail, a little turn, first one way, then another, batting its eyes from the sudden access of light, so swiftly that its very form was indistinguishable, it darted upward for refuge and concealment, as though it had been the ghost of Longfellow's Alpine youth, whose motto was "Excelsior."

Oh, what a scream rang through Beetle's ears. It pierced the floor and partitions, every fragment about the premises, that screech of the hapless Clotilda.

—"Gart them skirl,
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl."

As Bob had bounded in, Clotilda, utterly routed, and possessed by a thousand terrors of the imagination, bounded out, down from that tall desk, and out ten feet in the flower garden; crushing the heart's-ease; and towards her home, by the shortest bee-line ever traversed in air.

Veritably, her feet seemed not to touch the earth.

To accelerate her flight, Reynard, the yellow dog, with a keen reminiscence of former sport, as he saw the fox's tail trailing after her, and heard the view-halloo from the madly excited Beetle, tore after it with a speed, ardor and velocity that would have done credit to the best hound that ever ran fox to earth in Merrie England.

That was the first and the last visit Miss Clotilda Spinner ever paid the hermitage of Bachelor Bob Redfern.

CHAPTER VI.

LYING IN WAIT.

THE "certain affair" in which Victor was commissioned by his father to "treat" with that of Blanche, was not, it will be seen, the sole object that young gentleman had in view, in consenting to give up the delights of Saratoga, Newport and the White Sulphur, all of which he had had in contemplation, and concluding to bury himself for the season in a mountain valley altogether out of the world—his world.

Was he in love?

Yes—forever.

With whom?

With the whole fair sex.

But particularly with the young and pretty ones. Married or single made no particular difference to him—except, perhaps, he preferred the married, or a betrothed bride, for instance. There was danger in the pursuit, and he craved excitement.

He did not care for pleasure without a spice of peril.

He was thoroughly informed by his father in regard to "old man Millburn's affairs." How the colonel and Wall street broker, bear, bull, millionaire, speculator and gold robber had advanced from time to time to the old man, as his circumstances necessitated it, small sums of money for heavy bonds and deeds of trust, now on one tract, now on another of his extensive possessions, until there was scarce a house, lot or farm of the old man's vast estate, but Forestal held parchment, notes, certificates and every form of securities nominally for near their full value.

In all these rascally transactions, on the part of the colonel, the laws forbidding usury had been most cleverly evaded, by some such speech as this, made on one of these occasions:

"You perceive, gentlemen, I charge you this two hundred dollars for my consent to lend any money at all in the present stringent state of the money market. Not for the use of a thousand dollars—by no means.

"The interest which I am compelled to ask—for I would prefer to ask none, were I able—is only six per cent. on the face of the note. So of course, gentlemen, you recognize this is no usurious transaction—God forbid."

The gentlemen were Father Millburn and his solicitor, an honest and worthy lawyer, but too poor to help his friend except in the matter of advice.

The colonel thought it high time to foreclose some, if not all, these mortgages, as the old man was rather slow in paying up the interest, even begging indulgence in the matter of renewals.

The property thus circumstanced, the shrewd broker well knew was worth a thousand per cent. more than poor Millburn had ever received from this friend in need, who was a friend in deed.

An application for a new loan was the pretext for sending down Victor, with instructions to look into everything with a view to "winding up the concern." "But to conceal his object from every one, and especially to hoodwink that English bull-dog, Watt, who was argus-eyed about all that concerned the old man; being spooney' about the girl."

Aye—the girl.

Well Master Victor remembered that tall, graceful,

queenly figure. That wealth, that wilderness of purple-black tresses bound like a royal crown about her parian marble brow, or falling—as it had once accidentally fallen in his presence—around her form like a coronation-robe of the Queen of Night.

That her large melancholy eyes glittered like heavenly stars, and her fair face, tinged with a blush at the mischance, glowed like fleecy summer clouds veiling the harvest moon.

He was madly in love with her, but—he "was not a marrying man."

And, besides, he had met the fresh, blooming, bouncing, romping, laughing Rose, her friend.

His affections were divided.

The result was his singing in a voice as melodious as a Spanish troubadour's,

"How happy could I be with either,
Were t'other dear charmer away."

He was in, what such as he call, love a fervent disciple of Byron and Tom Moore.

He had not failed to perceive the powerful effect which his—as he supposed—irresistible attractions had upon each of these rustic beauties, which each betrayed to his acumen, in a characteristic manner.

His determination was to employ all the evil weapons with which fate had armed him to effect their destruction.

Full of these agreeable reveries, he cantered gayly along the road, inhaling with sensuous delight the country air, deliciously impregnated with mingled perfumes from orchards, woods and meadows.

Between the regular hoof-beats of his steed, the sound of mountain streams tumbling over rocky barriers, or

gurgling through their interstices, played sweet accompaniment, suggestive of rural picnics and general love-making.

This was a moment when nothing short of a boor would dare to molest a gentleman.

He had got to the very summit of Flag Staff Mountain.

The full moon was serenely riding aloft, amid weird masses of scudding clouds, which appeared envious to quench her light, and consummate their evil in the gloom.

Into these—like truth all purity—she would seem to plunge, only to reveal their hideous deformity, to unmask their hellish expression, and defeat and scatter every new attempt at combination.

Sometimes nearly drowned in the black sea of error, she would flounder sadly for a while and lost to sight, but still on, struggling through icebergs of prejudice, she would emerge radiant and triumphant at last—as I do now.

In other words, a summer storm was gathering from the west, which Victor had not observed.

After a longer observation of the moonlight than usual, just as he had reached the brow of the mountain, the moon sprung, full armed, like Mars from the brain of Minerva; from the enveloping bank of clouds, as a powerful ruffian did the same thing from the wooded bank to the left of Victor, and stood directly in his path.

"Stop! or you're a dead man!"

No reply from Victor.

He merely struck his spur savagely in the side of his horse, which caused him to rear and plunge forward, and ere the ruffian who had darted at the rein could seize

it, a savage blow crippling the knuckles fell athwart his hand from the loaded butt of Victor's whip, and the next instant the highwayman was down under the frantic animal's hoofs.

Even while the horse was in the act of trampling him on the flinty road, the scoundrel, with the activity of a wild beast of prey, seized the rider by the leg with a desperate clutch; the girth broke, and saddle and occupant were borne violently to the earth.

The infuriated animal sprang forward, tottered and trembled an instant upon the verge, as his iron shoes struck fire in his vain efforts to recover his balance, and with a cry that had in it something both supernatural and human, fell headlong down from crag to crag over the rocks.

For an instant the combatants, clenched in deadly embrace, could hear the sickening thud of the poor animal's body as it tore through various obstacles in its descent.

That fearful struggle lasted but a few moments. Victor, an adept in everything he attempted—practised in every feint and trick of the professional wrestler and the prize-ring—turned his brawny antagonist, as he did so, wresting a rusty old cavalry pistol from him at the instant it was about to be discharged full in his face.

He then threw himself upon the chest of the prostrate wretch with his knees, pressed the cold barrel of the weapon against the forehead of the would-be assassin, and demanded his surrender.

Either his assailant was nearly strangled by the desperate clutch Victor still maintained on his throat, or the well-known terrible effect of a heavy man's knees driven with all his force and weight into an opponent's ribs had caused him to faint.

Be that as it may, there was no answer to this summons. A white froth streaked with blood, even visible in the moonlight, issued from the gashed and swollen lips. The eyes, blood-shot and distended, seemed fixed and glassy in the uncertain rays, while a tremor succeeded by rigidity of all the limbs and muscles crept through that powerful frame a moment ago so instinct with hate and deadly purpose.

"Psha!" muttered Victor, as soon as he regained breath, as coolly as though seated in an arm-chair at home, "it won't do to kill the d——d scoundrel, he's not worth it. And, besides, I can have that done at any time if necessary—or make him believe so—same thing. I can *make* him useful. He's a powerful fellow, and would have done for me—even me, but for Tom King's training."

He quietly uncocked the pistol and shoved it in a rear pocket, for reference if needed; then, having ascertained the fellow was slowly exhibiting signs of returning animation, with fragments of the girth and bridle of the ill-fated horse, he bound the stalwart ruffian hand and foot, so deftly as to betray the practised hand of a skilful yachtman.

This done, he further examined the man, in order, if possible, to obtain some clue to identity, in case—more than likely—the fellow should seek to escape the penalty of his crime.

The whole personnel of the ruffian was of the most uncouth character, which, however, did not offend the fastidious gentleman in the least.

Evidently he had met this sort—and all sorts—of "cattle" before.

From the breast of his tattered blouse he took a fero-

vious-looking carving knife, exhibiting long, intimate and recent acquaintance with the grindstone.

Its temper and edge were almost equal to Victor's.

This he also secured just as the fellow, with a cough, a sputter, and a groan, awoke to the situation.

"Mercy! for God's sake, mercy! Don't kill me! Oh, don't kill me!"

"Silence! you scoundrel! I'm not going to kill you, though you deserve it for the death of that horse. Listen to me, and mind you tell me the truth, or I may change my mind. I'd as leave blow that fool-head of yours off—and rather, too—than look at it. But now look at me, and tell the whole truth, so help you God, or the devil, whoever you believe in. What's your name?"

"Curry—Bill Curry, sir."

"Did you follow me down?"

"No, sir; I come up fust, and lay for you here."

"You know what I mean, d——n you! Did you follow me down from New York?"

"No, sir—'deed, no, sir. I b'longs to the village, and never seed yer in my life afore I brought out the relays for the coach."

"Ah! now I remember your hang-dog face. You're hostler at Todd's?"

"Yes, sir. Oh, spare me, sir—don't kill me!"

"Hold your tongue!—answer me! What made you assault me to-night in this cowardly, murderous way?"

"Will you spare my life, sir, and I'll tell you all—everything?"

"For the present, you need not fear; but I won't promise more. If I want your worthless carcass to swing in a rope like carrion, I can have it any time—and I'm

able to pay for the luxury. Go on! Why did you attack me, you fool?"

"Because you kissed my gal, d—— I mean, sir, that was why."

"Who, the chambermaid?"

"Yes, Jenny Spry."

"Oh, the saucy little minx who showed me up to bed. You're a bigger fool than I took you for. I always kiss the chambermaids—it's my way. Every gentleman does—who can afford it. Where was the fool born? I forgot; the village. You should thank me that was all. And you would murder me for that, you infernal scoundrel?"

"She's nothing more to me after this night, sir. On'y spare my life, and I'll help you to her, or any other, for the matter o' that. I'll serve you for life and death, if you on'y don't kill me, or hand me over to old Waters or Knob Wallis."

"Knob Wallis—who's he?"

"The constable. They calls him Knob, 'cause he's got a club hand, with no fingers on it, 'cept the tip eend of a little finger. But he never let's nothink go he gets holt'er with that. Please ontie me, sir. I've got the fust licking, and the wust one, I ever got in my life. I'd sung out ''nuff,' on'y I didn't have no breath. 'Deed an' 'deed, sir, you are made out'n iron and steel springs from head to foot. I didn't know gen'lemen could fight much with fistis. But you did my business shortly."

It may have been the effect of these compliments, but more likely it was the result of deep calculation in that sagacious brain, which decided Victor to take the carving-knife, so lately sharpened, with other views, and cut the bands with which he had secured his prisoner.

Both rose to their feet, and again each confronted the other.

Curry towered nearly half a foot above his late antagonist, and was a larger, stouter, and heavier man.

But all this, he realized, was nothing alongside of that marvellous cool bravery and alertness—that wonderful superhuman strength, cat-like activity, and thorough training that beautiful gentleman-giant had displayed.

Bill Curry, like all dogs of his breed, would have grovelled in the dust before such a master, and licked his boots as he received the cudgel.

Victor, thoroughly read in human nature, as in everything almost, saw that his subjugation, body and soul, or rather beast and instinct, was complete.

He wanted just such an Afrite as this to help him to his treasures; or, if need be, release him from a cave occasionally—a disagreeable incarceration for Aladdin, the world over.

"Well," said Victor, "you're sorry you made such a fool of yourself, hey? Do you think your Jenny—or my Jenny, if I wish it—is likely to think you improved with that battered mug and broken hand—say?"

"Mister," said Curry, all admiration of the new object of his idolatry, "I believe as how you could throw me down with one hand."

"We'll see," replied Victor; and, stepping up to him, he, with one hand, caught the great, lubberly hulk by the waistband of his coarse trousers, stooped at the same moment, and, with the celerity of light, flung him clean over his head, as though he had been shot out of a mortar, some six feet in the rear of his own position.

This miracle—for such it seemed to Curry—from which he returned somewhat bruised, somewhat bleeding,

and altogether dusty, kindled in his thorough animal nature the devotion of a martyr to that power that henceforth was in a measure responsible for his destiny.

Bill Curry was pretty dirty clay in the hands of the very skilful and ingenious potter, Victor Forestal.

"Now, fellow, as you came to shoot and stab, take these butcher's implements again—here; and I will undertake to kick your ribs out and your head off before you can touch a trigger or lift an arm."

This was not bravado. It had that ring; but Curry knew better; and his reply was conceived in the most abject penitence.

"Oh, mister, if you never says no more 'bout this to nobody—no, not to me, I can't a-bear it—I'm ready to lay down a dozen lives for you any hour of the day or night, or anybody you appints, as long's my name's Bill Curry or anythink else. There, now, sir, I swear it by the great——"

"Never mind," interrupts Victor. "I know you, I believe you, I trust you. You dare not betray me. But take these things. I wouldn't defile my hands with them. How am I to get back?"

"I've got a hoss tied to a pine back here a bit, sir; the one I rode on and hitched to a sapling when I thought I were going to git even with the nicest, splendidest, powerfullest, bravest capt'n as ever I seed in all my born days. Lord forgive me—not as I mind killin' a man, more or less, as gits in Bill Curry's way, but if I had happened to kill you, cap'n, an' could a knowed as how you air the man you is, I never, never would a forgived myself the longest day I lived. I'll bring that hoss round here, capt'n, an' I'll walk and you kin ride him."

"What will I do about Todd's horse? 'Twas a fine animal—what's he worth?"

"Well, cap'n, he was goin' to sell that air hoss yisterday to Mr. Watt, the headman at the zinc mines, for $400."

"All right—I'll give him six. Do you know this man Watt?"

"Do I know him?—d—n and blast his soul! Asking yer pardon, cap'n; he's the only man, 'ceptin' yourself, as ever got the better of Bill Curry. I said there war'nt *no* other, but I didn't think o' him jist then. I was kind o' lookin' at a little gal in the village, who puts on a mighty sight o' airs, thinking herself too good for the likes o' me, in a way this chap didn't fancy, and one day I ups to the Moss Rose, as they calls her, and whispers a word in her ear, made her so almighty mad she screamed out like a wild-cat, she was 'feard long o' me,' when up comes that d—d Cornisher, an' knocks me down with my own stick, he snatched out o' my hand, afore I knowed what he meant. Yer see he didn't look a bit mad or wild-like, an' I'd no idee he meant to hit, or I'd ben ready for him. But, cap'n, if he ain't no partic'lar friend o' yourn, I've swore a oath to settle his hash the first chance I git—and Bill Curry keeps his word. I hope he ain't no friend o' yourn, cap'n."

"Far from it; you couldn't please me better. But I must select the time and manner."

"Hooray, cap'n! here's my hand on it."

"Never mind that—only you're not to show by word or look that you're particularly in my confidence hereafter. Keep your distance when others are about, and 'mind your eye;' you understand that, don't you?"

"All right, cap'n, all right."

This precious pair were not long in regaining the inn, where the "man of taste," calling the landlord, petrified that half-drunken worthy's "bottled-up" soul, by a thrilling narative of his narrow escape from instant, horrible death, on Flagstaff Mountain, from which he was rescued through the desperate courage and daring of Bill Curry, his hostler, at the very moment when his horse was about to leap over the precipice.

Curry had "snatched him from the saddle and the very jaws of death" as he phrased it. He insisted upon handing Todd a bank-check for six hundred dollars, although that gratified publican asserted the "hoss wan't wuth more'n five nohow."

Curry made great capital off this adventure through the village, notwithstanding Squire Waters and Knob Wallis "wouldn't believe a word on it," and the latter often asserted with solemn nods and winks:

"Bill Curry never got no black eyes nor broken knuckles afore, doing what was right, an' good an' he hadn't now. Mind you, that feller's got ter be watched, squire, and I'll do it, or bust."

Was it chance, fate, or the devil that threw together these two men, whose tastes, appetites, and hates were thus identical?

On his return to the inn the grateful Victor had "his preserver" closeted with him in his room for a full half hour, and so cautiously was the conference conducted that Jennie Spry could catch hardly a word, or a glimpse of the parties thereto, let her twist and strain her eyes and ears at the keyhole as she might.

The extent of her satisfaction being that the stranger was the principal speaker, in that soft, melodious cultivated tone which even now thrilled her, though she un-

derstood not its purport, and that Bill Curry replied in his vulgar contrasting huskiness, by a growl of assent or dissent, when the other paused.

One word, however, which afforded no clue was distinguishable, in the voice of Curry, as he approached the locked door, and as she noiselessly slipped in the opposite room. It was "grub."

"Grub! Lor' sakes—what's grub?—it can't be vittles," said the sagacious Jennie. "Oh, saints persarve us, it must be Grub ther grave-digger. It's *murder*—an' that devil is temptin' that blessed angel into sin."

Appearances are never deceitful, Jennie. "That blessed angel" meant Victor.

But Jennie, though a woman, kept her own counsel; notwithstanding the ungallant sneer.

She was not going to prejudice her own case, or defeat possible plans of her own, by injudicious babbling.

She was just as sly as she was Spry.

Jennie softly turned the key in the lock of the door, securing herself from intrusion and discovery, and as softly withdrawing it, applied her eye to that orifice.

Curry half opened the door of Victor's apartment, but, in obedience to some command of the occupant, left it an instant ajar, and went back to receive further instructions, apparently.

When he again appeared, to Jennie's astonishment he carried his clumsy brogans tightly gripped in one hand, and picked his way down-stairs, in his ragged and dirty stocking-feet, as though he were a burglar—which he might very well be.

Five minutes afterwards the "man of taste" emerged, but so complete was the metamorphosis that not even the eye of love could have recognized him as the elegant guest who honored the establishment with his presence.

He wore a broad-brimmed slouch hat crushed down over his eyes, and from head to foot he was clothed in gray, so as to be scarce distinguishable from the shadow of the gathering storm through which he stole.

Down the stairs and out the back-door of the inn she watched his noiseless course, at the risk of being herself detected, as she rapidly fitted the key, opened the door, and ran along the dusky passage cautiously in his wake for that purpose.

"Hum!" muttered Jennie. "If I don't make this night's doin's pay *me*, then my godfatherses and motherses didn't oughter call me Jennie Spry in the bonds o' baptism. What I knows I knows, and what I don't know I'll find out."

CHAPTER VII.

ENTRAPPED.

ROSE MOSS donned her coquettish little gipsy-hat, Uncle Jobson called her panama, made up a small bundle, embracing a change of raiment, in case she should stay all night, or a day or two with "dear Blanche"—a usual thing—and departed alone, timid and fleet-footed as an antelope, to assist her friend.

She found Father Millburn sleeping uneasily, during an interval of a serious remittent fever.

The girls, though of a different social sphere, were both young, both pure and innocent, both beautiful, and both in love. What more natural than, where society was so limited, they should be bosom friends and *partial* confidants.

A charming foil was each to the other, as they sat side by side in the old man's sick chamber.

Blanche divinely tall and queenly, more dazzling fair than usual from her recent indisposition.

Rose, to employ a new simile, plump as a partridge, with a pert little *retroussé* nose squeezed in between two as round and tempting peachy cheeks as ever had counterpart in ripe orchard.

Blanche with deep, dark, liquid orbs shedding, from the unfathomable distance of a thoughtful soul, light of melancholy tenderness.

Rose with two arch, laughing, mischievous, child-like, bright blue eyes, wherein Puck, and all the fairies, seemed by turns to play at "bo-peep."

Her trim little figure actually threatened to burst its bodice and spread the usual complement of gossamer wings of the approved pattern.

Blanche's massive blue-black hair bound about her grand, classic head like a royal coronet; a portion of which, released, fell over her shoulder, and mingling with the long, graceful sweep of her garments, gave her the majestic grace of a Pythoness.

Rose's rich tresses, now auburn, golden, flaxen, changeable as the light of which they seemed composed, were frizzed, and crimped, and braided, and curled all over her saucy little head, and never still a moment; like a bird's nest in which only mischief was hatched.

Her short skirt, so trimmed that it presented all the effect, without the presence of a pannier, and exhibited just a little more than a neat-turned ankle, and a pair of dainty wee feet in the prettiest possible gaiters, gave one the exact idea of an Arcadian shepherdess.

She gathered her sheep by the mere crook of her finger.

Alas! one of these sheep was a stray sheep. Why had not Victor called?

Not that it mattered to her. But it did to "dear Blanche;" and neither of them had yet received a visit from him, although he certainly was in the village.

Clotilda Spinner had said so, and Mrs. Wedlock had seen him arrive.

In sober seriousness, Moss Rose hated him. He was the black sheep of her flock, though she did not tell Blanche this conviction.

The man of taste had certainly been indiscreet, and betrayed to the quick womanly instinct of the innocent rustic beauty that "he was not good."

He had depended rather too much on her want of intellect, of social *status*—her poverty—the *veni, vidi, vici* effect of his mere presence and immense wealth.

He had not thought it necessary, in her case, to practise stratagem, or exert the fascinations of his remarkable intellect.

He merely whipped the stream for Rose on his way to capture Blanche.

Thus far, providentially, it appeared, the former had been forewarned and forearmed against the spoiler.

Blanche was in far greater danger. More sagaciously he had read her aright. In tenderness to that old man he had rivalled her. In the discussion of religious topics, and comparison of religious views and experiences, he had manifested such knowledge, zeal and humility that the old man had come to look up to him as a teacher, and upon himself as comparatively "a child in grace."

Positions were reversed. In fact, he had turned the dear, innocent old gentleman completely around, and he scarcely knew where he was without Victor, who had

almost taken that place in his heart once occupied by his only son Joe, dead and gone this many a year.

Almost—there was a rival for that place, and the old man had never yet quite made up his mind whether he best loved Victor or "that rough dog, John Watt."

Upon matters of business they had never spoken. It was the old man's impression that Victor knew nothing about these various little affairs; that it was a profound secret between the colonel, the solicitor, and himself.

Of course, excepting those parties which legal forms required should be admitted into that confidence.

The cause of the old man's shock and consequent illness was his supposition that the colonel had himself severed the hair which had so long suspended the sword of Damocles over him.

That his patience had given out, and he had written to say so, and his daughter had unfortunately read that letter. He had not apprehended the receipt of a letter containing any allusion to those transactions, whereby a clue could be obtained by an outside party. Hence, the terrible shock he had received at his daughter's behavior.

Had he supposed it was anything so innocent and desirable as Victor's most welcome, unexpected visit, the old man would have been equally delighted with Blanche.

But he never would have divined the state of that young lady's affections. Bless his dear soul, he could never see outside the rim of his old-fogy silver spectacles. Nor through them into the masked emotions of mankind, unless they were pointed out to him, by Blanche, or Victor, or John Watt.

And which of these was likely to do so now?

The girls sat conversing in an undertone, so as not to disturb the old man's slumbers, pouring by turns into each other's tingling ears, voluntarily, those sweet confessions the most clever and zealous priest of the faith habitually fails to elicit.

He may, perhaps, apprehend the situation, but the pith and marrow of a young girl's heart never percolates her lips in words, save into the ear of a confidant, herself in love, on the terms of mutual interchange of secrets.

"Suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping,
Rapping at the chamber door"—

which noiselessly opened and admitted John Watt.

There is apparently no substitute for perfect good breeding comparable to sympathy.

Victor could not have entered a sick chamber with better grace than Watt on this occasion.

John bowed in silence over the little hand which Blanche extended in greeting, merely giving it a slight, respectful pressure of condolence, then turned to Rosa with a pleasant nod of recognition and approval of her presence.

To Blanche, as he seated himself near her, he said in a tone of tender interest—

"And how is father, to-night, Miss Blanche?"

"Better—far better, thank you."

"Do *you* think him strong enough to bear a communication of much importance I have to make? Doctors are sometimes mistaken, but Doctor Daws, whom I have just left, is of opinion that good news, not of a startling nature, such as I am the bearer of, and which has a direct relation with the probable cause of his seizure, will relieve his mind, and go far to effect a cure. But, of course,

Miss Blanche, I would take no step without your sanction."

Did John know that the embarrassed blush which mantled his fresh face at this moment made him absolutely handsome?

Not a bit of it.

He never felt more unqualifiedly stupid in his life, and, if he thought anything on the subject, very likely it was that he looked uncommon awkward, and his case was becoming more and more hopeless every day.

So much for the total absence of self-conceit.

"Oh, dear John—Mr. Watt—if there is anything to tell which will relieve father's mind, tell him at once, or allow me to do so. Dr. Daws is never mistaken, the dear, good soul, and I am glad you asked him."

"Dear John." It meant nothing. It was only gratitude for her father's sake; but it rung in poor John's ears so that his foolish head swam; and he inferred more from her looks than subsequent words—for he had heard no more—that she approved the relation of his news.

When this overgrown boy's heart-beating had subsided enough for him to attempt further speech, he politely intimated to the young ladies he desired to be left alone with Father Millburn.

Then, turning the key on the inside of the door, he softly approached the bed.

The venerable old gentleman lay in that uneasy state between wide awake and sound sleep, which is the occasional effect of the administration of morphia.

Though but a few days ill, the cavernous cheek and ashen hue, the thin, bloodless lips, drawn tightly about the sunken mouth, attested fearfully the effects of

mental anxiety, and the deprivation of customary air and exercise.

There was no one there to see the big tear which gathered in the great baby's eyes, rolled down his cheek, and fell on Father Millburn's pillow; so there was none to be made ashamed.

A sleep so disturbed by painful visions as the old man's evidently was there could be no harm or danger in abbreviating.

John took the long, cold fingers of the sick man in his warm grasp, and gently pronounced his name.

"It is I—John Watt," in answer to the dilated, questioning eyes.

"My son—"

"You are better, Father Millburn?"

"Ay."

"I have something to tell you—news. Can you follow me in what I have to say?"

"Ay, my son. Speak slow, not loud."

"All is right at the zinc mine. We are making it pay. We'll have to get more hands. I go to New York to-morrow. You are better—'tis all I waited for."

"*You* must go? *You* leave me? Oh, John! Then I am indeed ruined—and lost! Cruel and ungrateful boy, why could you not wait until the crash is over—until they had laid this useless old body where I have sunk all my fortunes—in the earth?"

"Listen, dear sir, and prepare for a surprise. I go to New York for a short time—a few days, at farthest. I had long suspected the existence, hereabouts, of other and far more valuable mineral deposits than any previously known. This I was confirmed in by a visit, upon his invitation, to your clever old friend Redfern, and a

careful examination of his collection of minerals. You know my passion for the study of geology, thanks to some knowledge of which science I discovered the fact that five other valuable mineral ores are deposited in these hills, in a situation where they can be readily worked at trifling expense, and the yield of each promises to be almost without limit. Accompanied by Redfern, I have from time to time carefully inspected all these localities, and I do not hesitate to say that there is not a cubic foot of these heretofore almost useless mountain lands which is not worth nearly its weight in gold. My dear friend, I congratulate you. You will be, you are the wealthiest land-owner in the State."

"Oh, doubly, trebly ruined! All gone! all gone! Lost! lost! lost! Through my own folly, and not confiding in you, my child, I have as good as parted with everything, and beggared my poor girl—my daughter—my Blanche! Oh, heaven, was I but spared to learn the full extent of my folly, and then to die!"

The old man sank back on the pillow, whence he had half arisen in his excitement. A few drops of good Dr. Daws' restorative revived and supplied him with the requisite strength and calmness to afford his friend a complete exposé of his situation.

The mortgages John pooh-poohed as of no earthly consequence, since a few hours in Wall street—so he assured him—would result in his obtaining all the money needed to pay Forestal's claims, and set in full blast, with the best machinery, and experienced hands, the various processes of developing this mineral wealth.

John, like a thoughtful nurse-tender, administered another of the doctor's soothing prescriptions, and left Father Millburn dropping off into the most delightful slumber he had known for many anxious years.

As Watt encountered the girls on his way to the front door, his face looked so radiant, so hopeful, determined and energetic, so much manliness flashed out in its expression, that Rose, always the first to speak, exclaimed—

"I declare, Mr. Watt, you look like you are going to get married, but have got to kill and eat a fiery dragon first, who won't allow you to."

Neither of the girls asked his secret, for they saw his news was intended to be regarded as such, and it was of no use.

As he bade them good-night, with finger on lip, wearing that happy look which the contemplation of a good deed inspires, and disappeared in the night, flash after flash of vivid lightning lit up his retreating form, and repeated peals of thunder shook the hills, as though baffled and defeated demons were darting angry glances and hurling fierce imprecations on his path.

The storm had burst in all its mountain fury.

With difficulty closing the door, the draught from which had extinguished their lamp, the girls hurried back to the old man's sick chamb

They were scarcely again seated, discussing John Watt and his probable news, forming conjectures, as usual, very wide of the truth, when the subdued ringing of the front door bell indicated another caller, or the return of John.

The night by this was so tempestuous the last surmise seemed most probable.

Rose, pert enough in broad daylight when confronted with either sex, was the veriest coward in facing unknown dangers.

She would agree to stand at the head of the stairs so as to halloo murder, if necessary, but go down those stairs one step at this time o' night, and such a night, *that* she would not.

Blanche, smiling at her foolish terrors, and mock heroic resolution of making a determined stand in the rear, handed her lamp to Rose, to prevent its being blown out, and advanced alone to open the door, lighted as well along the hall as Rose's flaring lamp from the stair-head could effect.

No use to ask the question, "Who's there?" such a night as this.

She opened the door cautiously, and the lamp within, assisted by a lantern in the hand of one of two men without, revealed the well-known maritime garb and figure of Uncle Jobson, accompanied by a stranger.

"Miss Rose wanted."

It was the husky voice of the stranger which made this announcement, but the reassuring presence of Jobson with his old binnacle light dissipated the last remains of Blanche's nervousness or uncertainty.

"What's the matter, Jobson? Nothing very serious, I hope."

"Well, not much, Miss. You see the ole 'ooman, the old deaf housekeeper's took with a fit, and we couldn't do nothink with her, seeing as how we's only men, so shipmet here, says he, we'll fetch Rose and she'll bring 'er round all right in no time.

"I wanted to come arter 'er myself, but shipmet, says he, onless she sees me she'll be 'feared to come; she'll be 'feared to come, says he, onless I'm long o' you. An' I wouldn't ahear o' the old 'un goin' alone an' breaking his precious ole neck in sitch a gale as this here.

"Whew! hear that!"

Jobson stood some distance back, and both men were muffled up to the eyebrows, as well they might be, for the gale blew with a violence that drowned half the stranger uttered.

The man appeared somewhat intoxicated, which is not surprising, considering how Uncle Jobson and his guest had been employed when we left them.

At the sound of her name, and announcement of the old woman's condition, Rose flew back to Blanche's room to procure her storm wrappings, which she had provided in case of necessity, and affectionately embracing and kissing her friend, who assured her that "now her father was sleeping so sweetly, she need not fear leaving her alone with him."

"On no account," she bade her, "think of returning before morning."

And so the innocent girl parted with her friend.

The light within disappeared, as the door was closed and fastened for the night. At the same moment the light without vanished, and a heavy, rough hand was clapped over that little mouth, which, even until then, felt the tender pressure of Blanche's good-night kiss.

A gag was immediately substituted for the precautionary hand, her arms were pinioned securely behind her, a sack or muffler of some kind thrown over her head and figure, and she felt herself lifted in the arms of a powerful ruffian who ran up the mountain path by the brook-side with her as though her weight were less than an infant's.

The other, she had mistaken for her uncle, followed with greater difficulty some paces in the rear.

This violence filled her with horrible consternation, and revealed with the suddenness of the lightning which flashed around them, and glared into frightful abysses and hideous caverns, the terrible fact that she had been betrayed by ruffians, and was now hopelessly in the power of wretches who were utterly incapable of emotions of pity or of mercy.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SEARCH.

FATHER MILLBURN'S recovery was something wonderful. Nothing does an old man, who has had a hard time of it pecuniarily, so much good, as a streak of good luck and the early prospect of a big sum of money.

It is astonishing how it rounded out the old man's hollow cheeks, what youthful fire it renewed within him, evidenced by the merry twinkle of his eye, and his laugh like the cackle of a veritable golden goose.

He was twenty years younger the day after John Watt's communication.

He got up and dressed himself by himself, with unusual care, and in such a capital frame of mind was he, that Blanche actually caught him in the act of attempting to thread a cambric needle with his poor old eyes, for the purpose of sewing on a missing shirt-button, the absence of which, owing to his sickness and her anxiety, had escaped the vigilance of Blanche.

The old man was so happy he did not want to disturb anybody.

But the cause of his improvement in health and spirits he made a great mystery of, telling Blanche,

"Never mind, never mind, darling. Ask no questions. You'll know soon enough!"

Her skilful and nimble fingers soon released the old gentleman from his dilemma, and patting him on the cheek, with glowing face and fluttering heart, she flew down-stairs to meet one whose approach she had descried through the half-parted curtains.

No sound of the greeting that visitor received was audible to other than themselves.

"Dear Blanche!"

"Dear Victor!"

And there expression failed. Oh, for a painter's skill, or a poet's pen, to delineate that scene.

Yet how futile would be the limner's art here! How false the impression it would convey!

The true, pure, elevated love irradiating the form and features of the confiding girl, how completely was it simulated by him, the imagination of whose heart was evil and evil continually.

That eye, whose sidelong gaze as he bent down his kingly head towards her was expressive only of passionate devotion, refined, chastened and restrained as the adoration of a seraph, was furtively with fiendish calculation appraising the value of every tremor of form and voice, every change of color and expression, and noting with cool, malignant triumph the very pulsations of her heart.

Applying, as it were, to that virtuous breast the mental stethoscope, eager to detect incipient signs of that moral disease with which it was his purpose to infect it.

The examination was not altogether satisfactory.

He was entirely too wise and shrewd to mistake any single emotion betrayed by his reappearance after so long an absence for what it was not.

"Ah," thought this tender and wily lover, even as he held her beautiful form pressed against that organ he called his heart, "ah! she loves me, that's certain."

"Burns knew the sex. What's that he says about 'opportunity' or 'convenience' sweet, and a 'dear loved lad'? I must brush up my English classics. This is

just the bird to be caught by attic salt—chaff don't attract."

"Dearest, where is your father?" at length he said to Blanche, as she withdrew herself from the embrace she felt with instinctive delicacy was sufficiently protracted.

"Where is your dear father? I came ostensibly to see him on business, but really to be near my darling. It won't do to longer postpone a preliminary interview with him.

"The governor is badgering me already on the subject, and one has to write letters, confound them—unless they be love-letters to Blanche.

"But, oh, darling, I prefer interviews there a thousand times."

Father Millburn was informed Victor had called to see him.

"Tell him to walk up," was the reply.

The old man was seated in his arm-chair, at the open window, for it was charming weather, entertaining himself with a current of thought, along with the current of air—all the more inspiriting from its novelty.

"Come in, my boy, come in, Victor! Sit down.

"Why, my child, your father's letter like to have been the death of us all here. What, with Blanche fainting, and all that, nothing would do but I must go off too like a young lady with nerves. No fool like an old fool, I suppose, eh?"

"That's so," thought Victor. What he said was—

"Ah, Father Millburn, you are not so young as you were, and you have had heavy trials with which the Lord has been pleased to visit you. He afflicts us all; 'whom he loveth, he chasteneth.'"

"Yes, sir; I suppose so; but do we love Him, my child? Let us do *that.*"

"I hope so, Father Millburn. I strive to do so; but the best of us fall short of our duty. This reminds me of the duty of obedience to parents. My father—"

"Never mind, my child!" interrupted the old man; "a friend of mine, well acquainted with my affairs, has gone to New York. He will see your father, so it is unnecessary for us to confer on the subject. I am sorry he though it advisable to admit even you to a knowledge of our affairs. Old men get along best together. No offence, my son, I hope?"

"The devil!" thought Victor again. "What's up, now? It's Watt, I suppose. I wish the train would collide or run off the track; anything to break the fellow's infernal neck.

"Ah!" said the pleasant gentleman, "I am heartily glad of it. I hate business, and worst of all, with my friends."

"How long do you stay, child? There's no need to hurry back. We have not had you among us now for—let's see—near two years. You needn't run away too soon. Fine air here in the mountains. I can't ask you to stay with us—sorry—there's nobody here but womenfolk. Where are you stopping?"

"At Todd's; but the licentious atmosphere of a tavern does not suit me. I have taken a cottage, and will stay a month—maybe two. I have sent for my horses, and one of my carriages suited to country roads, so that you and Blanche may drive out with me occasionally, if I may have that honor."

"Good! I am glad you stay some time. It will make it lively for Blanche. Poor child, somehow she has been

moping, I fear, of late. They tell me she is very fair, but I am afraid it is pallor; she is not well, she is not well."

The subject of this conversation entered the room hurriedly at the moment, and certainly her appearance more than justified the old man's speech. Even Victor, imperturbable Victor, was startled at the change which had taken place in her since their meeting a few minutes before.

"O father! O Victor! what—what is to be done! Rose—Rose Moss has been kidnapped by villains, last night, from our very door; carried off no one knows where. Her uncle has sent a boy to tell us. The poor old fellow has gone in search of her himself, and the whole village is aroused, and in all directions they are scouring the mountains!"

"Dear, dear Rose, what will become of her? oh, what will become of her?"

The old man covered his forehead with his hand, and leaned forward on the arm of his chair.

The young one sprang to his feet, and trembled—aye, *trembled.*

Surely there must be some mistake here. We have judged him too severely. From present indications we have wronged this paragon. If we may trust our senses this "man of taste" must also be a "man of feeling." This cannot be *acting*, is it?

Calmly, like a parent soothing a beloved child, Victor took her hand, and pressing it tenderly, said:

"Remain here with your father, Miss Blanche. She will soon be found. Depend upon it, there is no danger; there *can* be none. Even now she may be in the care of her friends. If not, I promise you, we'll soon come up

with the villains, and they shall pay fearfully for this daring outrage.

"Tell me, as well as you can, all you know of the affair. How many of these scoundrels were there? Did you recognize any of them?"

"There were only two. I thought they were her uncle and a friend of his, named Marly, Rose said was stopping with them a few days. The one who spoke to me, for Rose was afraid to come down, was, as I supposed, the visitor. Oh, I see it all, now! Poor—poor Rose! O Heaven! what will become of her!" and Blanche fell to sobbing as though her heart would break.

"Calm yourself, dear Miss Blanche, we'll soon recover her, sound and well!

"Did the other, whom you supposed her uncle, speak?

"How were they dressed? What did they look like?"

"The man I took to be Jobson stood off some distance. I took it to be them, because—because—oh, it is all my fault, I thought, because they asked for Rose, and were both dressed in oil-cloth sailor-clothes, and spoke of the housekeeper being taken with fits, which she *is* subject to, that they must be Rose's uncle, and his friend.

"Besides, I am not sure but he *said* they were. I am not suspicious. Had the other spoken I would have known at once. I would know Jobson's honest voice among a thousand. A villain could never counterfeit that.

"The one who spoke to me was intoxicated; but that did not arouse my suspicion, for Rose had said they were home drinking what they called 'grog,' and smoking pipes."

"Did you see either of their faces? Would you rec-

ognize either of them again, were you to see him, from any circumstance or peculiarity?"

"No; one was about the height and figure of Jobson, and carried a lantern, which Jobson always does at night, I believe.

"I thought he was Rosa's uncle more from his sailor-clothes and his lantern than anything else, and from what the other said.

"He may, or may not, have resembled him. I should never know either of them again."

"Good!" inwardly and silently chuckled Victor to himself.

Blanche fancied he shuddered.

"This is worth another 'twenty' apiece to the dogs. Clever fellows; they'll make their fortune yet, or hang," thought Forestal.

"Haste, dear Victor!" exclaimed Blanche, then outside beyond the hearing of Father Millburn, who sat, stupefied, in his chair.

"Haste, oh, haste, dear Victor, and rescue her, if you love me!"

The words were sealed on her lips with a passionate kiss, which suffused her pale cheek with blushes, notwithstanding her terrible anxiety as to the fate of Rose.

What miraculous conversions and reformations will not the love of a pure, devoted woman sometimes effect, even with case-hardened sinners!

Though you may not have thought it, from the contact of those pure and loving lips, Victor rushed forth to lead the party in search of Rose—and mislead them.

CHAPTER IX.

THE APOTHECARY.

JENNIE SPRY had a round dozen of admirers.

Among the train there was the swain named Simeon Simples, who was the village apothecary.

Jennie always persisted in calling him Simpleton Simples.

It sounded, in her estimation, "more ristocrackit, and besides it suited him, poor fool."

Now that was not generous of Jennie. But we never said Jennie was generous.

Albeit, it was not true of Simples.

We have known apothecaries bigger fools than he was, by long odds.

Besides, he had not as yet poisoned anybody outright in making up a prescription—that is, fatally. Of course he was only a village apothecary, we know that—and there was no coroner there to make it worth his while. Take him to the city and no doubt he would soon become an aspirant for the highest honors of the business—or profession.

But Jennie called people "fools"—whom, and when, and where she pleased—who admired *her*.

Which is a sure proof *she* did not think them so by any manner of means.

How came Jennie's Simpleton *par excellence* to possess the honor of her acquaintance?

Readily explained. Every three weeks, Todd, the gallant colonel and "proprietor of the American Spread Eagle," was accustomed to "spread himself," in other words, "go on a bust"— the very thing which our

acquaintance, the constable Wallis, was perpetually threatening to do, in another sense.

The consequence of these "busts" was, that Todd was spread on the flat of his back for the rest of that week—which might therefore be called his Sabbath.

He would, in those periodical fits of his, drink "toddy for Todd," until Todd could hold no more toddy.

His stomach being human, although inhumanly treated, rebelled at last against such vile usage, and enforced its own prohibitory law.

At this stage there was no call for further relays.

It would not lay—no, lie—at all.

He might attempt to pour it down, but he soon found he was absolutely and literally obliged to give up drink.

Then he became horribly bilious.

His stomach no longer filled with whiskey, his head began to swim.

His nerves began to crawl, like the marble-bag full of Beetle's pets, and he began to have visions of visionary snakes, such as would have charmed the eyes of Grigg, did such "crawlin ferlie" actually exist.

At this rate, and after a few more such glorious "bursts," the prospect was, that Todd would soon run his game to earth.

After it should have taken to "cover," such as Grimes, the undertaker furnished.

His last "bust" would be of such description as Grub, the grave-digger, should be commissioned to erect over him; inscribed, it should not be "*Hic Jacet*"—here he lies—(down understood)—but hic-hic-hic-*up*.

Todd had one of these "indispositions"—to drink any more—when Jennie "accepted the situation" of chamber-maid of the Spread Eagle, and she was forthwith sent to

Simple's shop for the usual remedy; a gout cordial which Dr. Daws had prescribed.

Todd had another attack now—he had had several in the interval—and Jennie was again in "the nasty poticary shop," as she phrased it.

"Oh, Mr. Simpleton, the kernel's bad ag'in—wuss nor' ever! I want the mixter."

"I never knew he was good."

This was an apothecary's joke, and should be taken without scruple.

"Ah, you're always getting on so. You must get on better before I'll have you."

The apothecary repressed his inclination to reply.

He kept his eyes on Jennie, and took down a bottle of prussic acid.

This he put back on discovering his mistake, and substituted hydrocyanic acid.

It occurring to him in time that five drops of the latter were once administered, with immediate fatal effect, to an enraged elephant escaped from a menagerie, he concluded for the present *not* to look at Jennie.

By minding his eye and not Jennie's—one thing at a time, and tasting as he went along, finding himself still alive, he handed the preparation over to the customer, and charged a dollar and a quarter.

But Jennie did not go.

She had as yet only attended to "the kernel's" business; she now proceeded to her own, which was gossip, flirtation, whatever might arise.

"Mr. Simmunses, what makes all you potecaries look like you was biled?

"Lor sakes, I can tell a potecary wherever I sees him—they all 'pears jist like so many dough-faces, with

kimplexshuns on 'em like they was made out'n putty, and eyes for all the world like winder panes o' glass. Then they has blue spectickles on with four eyes to 'em.

"They all has weak eyes. I guess the hartshorn and things does it—don't they?

"And they makes so many nasty things to curl white people's hair and take the kink out o' niggerses', that you allers find that they is bald as my hand, or their hair stands out all over their heads like they was skeered. Handling so many pizens, I guess, does it."

How long this tirade of personalities might have lasted there's no knowing, had not Sim plucked up courage, and coming outside the counter where she was seated, balancing the bottle on her knee, confronted her with his arms akimbo, and thus delivered himself:

"Jennie Spry, hold your tongue. You only want to hear yourself talk, and pester me. You are wasting your time—or the colonel's rather. If apothecaries don't look as blooming and pretty as you do, it's because they get no air or exercise. They have less time they can call their own, and more bother, and less thanks than any other human creature—except an editor or an author—which is the same thing."

"'Deed an' 'deed, dear, I believe that's the truth, and you talk sense now, ef your name *is* Simpleton."

"When you marry me, and live in that back shop, your name will be Mrs. Simeon Simples."

"Not if my name's Mrs. William Curry, or Mrs. half-a-dozen-others-es, nor yet, if I don't change my name at all, but goes away from here with lords and barrow-nights in disgust."

Jennie meant disguise.

"What does the girl mean?" asked Sim, in evident uneasiness.

"Ah!" echoes Jennie. "What *does* she mean?"

"Jennie Spry, I'm afraid you're a fool."

"Simpleton Simmunses, you *know* what your *name* is; and you warn't called outer it."

"Ha' done with this, Jennie; you know I'm no fool, or I wouldn't stand any chance with you!"

"And who says you *do*, Impudence? Tell me that, while you're telling fortunes.

"But you've got to make 'em, not tell 'em, afore you come hankering after me. I'm meat for your betters."

"Oh, Jennie, Jennie, dear!" exclaimed Sim, in great agitation, grabbing at her hand, and breaking the bottle on the floor.

"Ha! ha! ha! Now you've done it! all out'er your own pocket, too. Fill another up right away for the kernel—he's dead by this, I s'pose—and none o' your charging two dollars and a half; we won't pay it. I know you potecaries," comforted Jennie.

Poor Sim proceeded to do as his tantalizing sweetheart bade, without speculating on the probabilities of a dead man requiring a draught, or scouting the insinuated aspersion of his honesty.

He was decidedly crest-fallen at the disastrous failure ot his attempted gallantry, and sooth to say was as completely spilled and smashed and felt in as bad odor as the miserable preparation on the floor.

As he looked at it, not daring to look at Jennie, that mischievous, mirthful maiden laughed till the tears ran down her face.

She, for a moment, could view the occurrence in no other aspect than its ludicrous one.

Then she became silent and thoughtful as the preparation of its substitute went on.

It was done, and labeled, and inscribed with the directions for administering.

It was wrapped up and carefully propped against the side of the glass protection to the scales; but poor Sim was deep, deep down in a brown study.

Mentally boring himself with the forlorn hope of "striking oil"—a capital article of hair-oil, perhaps—without which, he could never, oh never, never, never hope to marry Jennie Spry.

Jennie sat watching him.

"Mr. Simples!"—she had never called his name so simperingly—so correctly before.

He pricked up his ears, metaphorically speaking.

"Simeon!"

He was over the counter and at her side in an instant, without accident.

She turned her head one side, and looked up at him, with that peculiar glance no man can describe, no man can imitate, no man receive from the girl of his heart without a thrill, destructive of the last care of consequences.

There was—there was a tear slowly trickling down that dimpled cheek, and its successor gathering and trembling in that languishing orb that had shot a Parthian arrow through his soul.

He was on his knees at her feet in an instant.

He clasped her again and again to his tumultuous bosom, and kiss after kiss rained upon her cheeks, her eyes, her lips, as he rapturously exclaimed, "My own! my own! my darling! my adored! Oh, Jennie, you are mine! you are mine!"

He arose the moment his subsiding transports allowed, and oh, what a shout, what a yell of irrepressible, boisterous laughter burst from Jennie's dewy lips, till she found breath to gasp amidst her mad mirth,

"Oh, lordy! oh, dear! you'll be the death o' me, Simmuns. You're all a muck o' med'cine from head to foot! You knelt right down in the puddle of old Todd's physic!"

At this instant Dr. Daws entered the shop, saw and heard all.

Jennie, smothering with laughter, rushed past the doctor, forgetting her bottle on the counter, while the unfortunate, distracted apothecary bolted out the back door as though the shop were on fire, tearing his hair out by handfuls, and imprecating curses upon his evil genius.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAVE OF DARK HOLLOW.

HAD Rose screamed her loudest, magnificent as was her chest, and astonishing as were the volume, compass and purity of her tones, the din of the tempest would have defied all competition.

The scream of a steam whistle just then had been as inaudible as the sound of the penny toy for which Ben Franklin paid "too dear."

It looked, therefore, like needless precaution to defile her "cherry mou" by the imposition upon it of that horny hand, and brutal cruelty only could consent to the

risk of laceration incurred by the use of the implement of torture called a "gag."

But, as the guilty flee when no man pursueth, so are they equally unreasoning in the measures they adopt to escape detection.

Their theory, on the contrary, is, rather a thousand innocent ones perish than one guilty suffer.

Mercifully nature—as it always does—interposed, relieving the hapless Rose of pain and apprehension together, by a period of unconsciousness which lasted until the villains had penetrated the mountains to a point sufficiently remote to relieve them from all fears of immediate pursuit.

The removal of the cruelly distending gag, and the fresh air blowing upon her fevered cheek, pitifully sprinkling her with rain, restored her consciousness, and alas, also, the full appreciation of her hideous peril.

"She's not dead—you're a fool!" were the harsh words which unlocked her senses, and restored the memory of the dire misfortune which had overtaken her.

"Oh, have pity on me. Mercy! mercy!" screamed the poor little maiden in an agony of terror.

She might as well have invoked the storm, which hurled her words back in her teeth, sputtering and gibbering lightning, crashing thunder, and howling derision in the gale.

There was not a flinty rock of all those crags could have, as unmoved, withstood the assaults of vexed and tormented wailing winds and the deluge of the rain, as the flinty hearts of those wretches did the emulating tempest of the unfortunate girl's despair.

Shrieks, prayers, protestations, promises, threats and cajoleries, by turns, accompanied with floods of tears, fell

unheeded and in vain from their frantic and exhausted victim, as the inhuman villains pursued their dangerous route deeper into the fastnesses of the hills.

She was still bound hand and foot, for the continuous lightning revealed the desperate wildness of that usually languid or mirthful eye, and they dared not release those dimpled hands, all delicate as they were, which they knew instinctively would be instantly at their throats.

She was transferred from one to the other, as each became fatigued with the writhing burden, and was borne up hill-sides so steep that they were compelled to clutch the wet saplings, shaking down a shower of the only answering tears, and pull themselves along, by main strength, from rock to rock, from crag to crag, anon scrambling down with fearful speed, amid an avalanche of loosened slate and earth, to the level of narrow ledges, where,

> "In that lowest depth a lower deep,
> Still threatening to devour them, opens wide."

They continued their mysterious course away from any beaten path, now on one side of a tumbling cataract, then on the other, crossing by stepping-stones of huge rocks, through which the swollen stream roared and raged. Sometimes along the slippery, prostrate trunks of huge trees, felled by the woodman, or torn up by the violence of the flood, and borne along by the current until entangled in the masses of stranded *débris*, so as to bridge the torrent.

Fettered by these, and various obstacles, the stream was often frightful in its aspect.

Still they went on, bearing Rose, who had sunk into the lethargy of despair.

Leaving the banks of the torrent for a while, but not losing the sound of many waters, which the storm shut

out by dense forests and towering walls of rock, permitted to be occasionally audible.

Again they clamber up the rocky hill-side by spiral, obscure pathways, if any, clinging to wet bushes and trees and vines, tearing through underbrush, jumping down rocks, climbing others, "terrace above terrace," they win the very summit at last, and strike into a sheep-walk in the midst of a narrow, level region.

Before them now appeared two lakes. An upper and a lower sheet of crystal-clear, ice-cold water, about two miles long, by from one to one and a half wide, and so deep were they that the mountaineers, after sounding the very deepest part, fifty, sixty, seventy and eighty fathoms, without success, gave up the attempt, and ever after that part was called and known as "the Bottomless Pit."

Nevertheless, as the storm dispersed with the sudden-ness it had arisen, and the full-orbed moon poured down a flood of splendor which obliged poor Rose's brutal captors again to muffle their features, which in the darkness they had not needed to do, had there been any with a soul for the beautiful to contemplate it then, they would confess it an enchanting scene, never to be forgotten.

This great body of water, tranquil as a mirror, and gleaming like silver, has its source entirely within or beneath itself. It is fed exclusively from numberless pure mountain springs permeating the surrounding hills, and secretly, beneath the surface, contributing to its sustenance.

Rose had heard of the Crystal Lakes, but never seen them before.

It aroused her from her lethargy.

A terrible apprehension, which had strangely slumbered hitherto, shot across her mind.

Was it their intention to drown her here?

If so, wherefore?

In whose way could she be? That any one hated her, except through jealousy, the coquettish little darling could never imagine.

In an agony of renewed terror she waited and watched every movement. But now she was silent. A sickening horror pervaded her, which rendered utterance or motion impossible. She could only be

"A thing of eyes which all survey."

They threw an old military cloak, and sundry coarse wrappings, which had originally figured in her abduction, upon the grass, a few rods from the margin of the lake, and laid Rose upon this rudely improvised couch.

Next they bailed out a leaky, warped and crazy old boat, which lay hauled half way up on the shore, lifted and placed her in the stern, unmoored, shoved off, and, as it left the bank and slapped upon the surface of the water from the impetus it had received, leaped in also. They poled out with the oars until it reached deep water, then dropped them into the rowlocks, and gently stirred the motionless tide.

It seemed like Sabbath-breaking thus wickedly to disturb the holy quietude of the scene.

As Rose lay with her head supported by the bulk of the garments hastily bundled and thrust under her, her face turned from the moonlight, her glance swept the placid surface of the stream over which they glided silently, as with muffled oars.

The border of the lake, for some distance out, was

beautified with bright and variegated aquatic leaves and flowers, the brilliant colors of which were clearly distinguishable in the moonlight, which from reflection in the transparent tide was sufficiently light to enable one to read, if desirable.

Water lilies, snowy white, or yellow as gold, advanced their fairy-pennons from the midst of their tent-like camp of leaves floating on the wave, wherein, no doubt, the elfin host lay dreaming.

Graceful willows, and an unimaginable variety of other growths, festooned with vines, and fantastically draped with hanging moss of delicate fibre and pearl-tinted, jutted out over the lake from the crevices of limestone boulders, upheaved by some convulsion of nature. These were rent and split by the frost of many winters with the regularity of masonry.

This formed an exquisite green canopy all along the margin, while rock, foliage and sky were reflected in the placid stream beneath with the faithfulness of a mirror.

Rose felt an awful and divine calm settling over her soul.

A conviction, amounting to certainty, that she was approaching her doom, and her grave was yawning beneath her.

As she brooded over the thought with glassy eye, fixed and solemn as the melancholy moon above, past which the shadows of the earth were likewise drifting, a heavenly peace possessed her soul, engendering that supernal resignation which acquiesces—"not my will, but thine, O Lord, be done."

Another thought succeeded.

That she was already dead, and gliding over that mysterious river which divides time and eternity.

Of her unwelcome companions one was hidden from her view by the position she occupied, and the tall, dark figure of the other standing near the prow, loomed against the sky, and needed no fevered imagination to fancy it the fearful ferryman of souls across the Stygian river.

"Soon," murmured the half frenzied dreamer, "soon I shall touch the everlasting shore, where mother is—where father is—and almost all I love have gone before, and are at rest.

"Mother, dear mother, I come, I come—nevermore to be an orphan child. Heavenly Father, take me to thyself. Oh, how sweet, how sweet it is—to die."

Again the unhappy child lost consciousness.

Presently the bow of the boat grated against the stone dam which separated the lower from the upper lake; by far the larger and deeper body of water, filling to the depth of hundreds of fathoms the valleys and gulfs between towering mountains, densely wooded to their summits.

As the poor prisoner was once more lifted out, in order that the clumsy craft should be dragged over the narrow causeway and launched the other side, the sturdier villain, who appeared to be spokesman and master-spirit, leaning over her insensible form, grunted out:

"Gone ag'in! Drat and blast these gals, I say, there's no pleasing of 'em. Ef you grabs 'em up an' ties 'em, an' gags 'em, they squirms and wriggles like sarpints, so there's no holdin' of 'em. Ef you onties 'em, they kicks up the devil with their screechin' and crying. An' ef you lets 'em alone they goes of shammin' dead this a way. Here, ole man, lay holt! Put her out on the grass there under ther bushes. Never mind makin' no bed now—it's

all ther same to her, an' me too. Bear a hand now, and git this here ole wash tub over ther dam."

This was at length effected, assisted materially, no doubt, by the plentiful use of adjectives with which the boss-scoundrel interlarded his commands.

"She's afloat ag'in, hooray! Shove the gal aboard. Never mind your false-face, she don't see nothink now, darn her.

"What the blazes you're about—lookin' like a stewed monkey at the gal that way for, ye yaller-skinned raw-head an' bloody-bones ye? Ain't ye got over that *yit*, ole Methusalem?

"She's a pooty corpse, ain't she? Wouldn't yer like to 'gather her in,' now, say? There now—so—no, her head t'other way, yer don't want'er drownd her *yit*, do yer? Ef she gits overboard here, it won't be a job in *your* way.

'I gather 'em in!
I gather 'em in!
Gather, gather—'

ha! ha! ha! that's *your* sort. Where's that pistol? Is it loaded? Well, ready—aim—fire! Toddy for Todd—ha! ha! ha! and Todd for toddy—and toddy for everybody. That's a rhyme ef ye takes it in time, and this is another, ef ye had its brother, but as ye hevn't got its brother, ole stick in the mud—or ole dig in the mud—tetch it lightly, and shove off there!"

This was a long speech for the hitherto silent Charon—but he had been slyly, from time to time, imbibing a potation from a short-necked, big-bellied black bottle, which the other was directed to carry in the pocket of his nor'wester.

Every time it was demanded by a nudge, it was returned with the whispered injunction to "tetch it lightly."

Whether said instruction was rigidly obeyed, or the potent liquor had less effect on "raw-head an' bloody-bones" than on the flesh and blood of the other, cannot be known.

He was certainly less drunk, and problematically "copper-lined."

Poling along, as before, for a short distance, again one resumed the oar, and the other, acting as pilot and watch, took his old stand in the prow, occasionally shoving away, with the oar which he held, from the shores of numerous picturesque islets dotting the "Enchanted Lake."

For a moment longer the sorrowful moon rained down a flood of saintly splendor upon the dark boat, the wary, now silent Charon, and bent, shadowy form of the old man, rocking back and forth at the oar, like some weird thing bewailing the dead.

The dead—represented by Rose, extended across the seats, whose pallid, upturned face, shut lids and streaming, rippled, golden hair, illustrated with glory in the moon-beams, would have entranced the soul of Gustave Doré.

If anything on earth ever did or could, it presented a scene on which pitying angel eyes might look and weep.

The next moment night, deeper and darker than the grave, swallowed up the miserable boat and more miserable occupants.

"Hell! Light that torch—what you're 'bout? Light the torch, can't ye—This is 'Dark Hollow.'

"If ever I come here ag'in, at midnight, with the likes of you, and that—that *thing* there, then my name's not—never mind names—Give me the pistol."

A resinous pine torch which had been provided was kindled and stuck in the stern of the boat.

Its sullen, red light had hardly cast an unhallowed glare around the spectre-like craft, when shriek after shriek rang in their ears, echoed and re-echoed from the inky blackness of the wooded hills around.

Rose had recovered just sufficiently to realize her situation, and hear that fearful demand, "give me the pistol."

Her shrieks had not died away, before the waters were convulsed around the boat, and huge pickerel and bass leaped struggling and gasping in their midst, attracted by the light, while water terrapin approached, diving, and reappearing nearer and nearer, stealthily protruding their uncanny heads above the black surface, and winking with their skinny, yellow-striped eyes from their horny sockets upon the light and supposed fishermen.

The ruffians half leaped overboard in their momentary terror and surprise.

Then, without a word of explanation or excuse, the tall one bounded toward the light, treading the luckless fish beneath his feet, and grasping a charred portion of the torch, yet not extinguishing the light, crushed out the embers with his callous hands, reducing it to powdered charcoal, with which, with a quick movement, he immediately smeared and blackened first his own and next the equally repulsive visage of his accomplice.

"Now," he exclaimed, "our own mothers wouldn't know us—whoever *they* was.

"Look here, my chuck," addressing the frightened girl, who had struggled to a sitting posture, "it's no use o' your playing stiff, or acting ghost. You can screech your daylights out, but I kin tell you this, nobody's goin' to be fool enough, ef they knows it, to come within a mile o' Dark Hollow this time o' night, and sposin'

anybody did git lost, and stray this a-way, ef they didn't git skeered to death with sich onairthly hollerin' as that 'ere you treated us to, and turn tail in the other direction, they'd be sartin sure to break their goll-darned necks down the rocks tryin' to git here.

"So jist you dry up—shet up now—that's what you do, or—" and the fellow drew out and displayed the gag to the shuddering girl.

The other scoundrel chuckled, a mean, sniggering mockery of a laugh, a thorough betrayal of his nature.

"Here we are now, comrade, right between them two big rocks, you haul the blasted boat out'er the water (bless me ef ever I see sitch a snail of a tub), give us the glim, and follow me with the gal. Mind your legs now, they's none o' the best; ef you miss your footin' here there's no telling where you'll land—in Chaynee maybe."

With this expressive caution, holding the half-burnt torch high above his head, he clambered up the wildest conceivable mountain footpath, which bore the very faintest indication of having been trodden before.

Fortunately for the little old fellow, who staggered after under the weight of the buxom ill-fated damsel, they had not far to go.

"Now you stop right here a minute," he said, "while I see ef all's right in the bushes over yonder. Keep your eye on the gal—they's all slippery, tied or ontied."

He was obeyed, and Rose was suffered to lean against the great tangled trunks of creepers which clambered all over the huge rocks.

He advanced a half dozen paces, and was in a moment as completely lost as though the earth had swallowed him up.

Unhappily this was not the case.

He returned in a moment, emerging from the undergrowth, and beckoned his companion.

Presently they stopped at the narrow mouth of a yawning chasm in the cliff, so small, so low, and thickly concealed by the wild masses of vegetation that it was with extreme difficulty, when disclosed, they could enter it.

This was effected by the little one's being thrust in first, reluctantly crawling on hands and knees; on his answering satisfactorily, the torch was passed in to him, and Rose was half pushed, half pulled after him, at the cost of the partial destruction of her drapery, and some slight bruises and abrasions of the tender flesh.

Lastly, with grunts and maledictions, the principal ruffian brought up the rear.

As soon as he stood erect within, which the lofty height of the interior more than allowed, he turned to his accomplice:

"Old man, you can git—git now. Find your way back to the boat and out'er this, an' snug in your bed 'ithout anybody's spyin' you afore daylight. You ain't got any too much time nuther.

"Don't you leave the sign of a bit o' rope even on the shore here, or a oar, or anythink o' the kind.

"Ef this thing comes to a trial in court we don't want *your* oar stuck in, whatever the lawyers may say.

"You know ther lakes—leave yer boat hauled up, when ye come to the dam, among ther bushes—mind and make a short cut, and quick time, on foot down from that.

"You can't pull the boat over the dam a long o' yourself, or *that* 'ud be best.

"Mum's the word, you know. You know *me*, and you know *more* 'an me—and there's wuss things than hangin', mind that—now 'scoot.'

"I'll see you soon, or send them to you, as *kin* see you jist the same—vamose!"

Without a word the old wretch scrambled out again, and departed.

Rose staggered up against the flinty side of the cave nearest her, where she sunk down more dead than alive.

She found herself on a liberal bed of fresh hay or straw, in the midst of which she fell with a despairing groan.

The fellow lit a fresh torch which he took from a corner of the cave, with which he appeared familiar, and stuck it in a crevice of the wall.

She was too sick with terror to observe more than that she was in a spacious apartment, fully twice the height of her jailor, who, approaching her, spoke as follows:

"Now, my pritty, you're *home*. How d'ye like it? This was *my* country house, but ye see I've give it up to a friend an' his bride for ther honeymoon. We don't receive no company—'no cards, no cake, no company,' 'N. C.'—them's the letters.

"That ain't ther bridal bed, but you kin sleep there till the furniture comes home from the 'polsterers. That'll be to-morrer, ef you're good, not 'ithout.

"Now *I'm* tired, an' want to go to bed. I sleeps in the next room, right threw that other hole there. The room ain't as fine as this, but it's good enuff for a gentleman's groom, and that's what I be.

"Ef ye wants anythink don't trouble yerself to ring,

jest screech, like you did a while ago in the boat. We has attentive servants here, an' as ole Todd says—ha! ha—ef there is any fault found with attendants please complain to the landlord.

"He'll be along sooner 'an you want.

"There's somethink to eat in that there basket, an' a bottle o' wine; think o' that, honey.

"I'd like some myself, but I darsn't. I promised the landlord I wouldn't touch nothink nor nobody till he'd helped *hisself* first. *My* turn'll come arterward.

"Jest one word more 'fore I lays my body down to sleep.

"Ef you'll cross your heart not to try on no running away or nothink, I'll ontie them cords o' youres and let you loose, so as you kin sleep some, and look pooty when your partner comes.

"There now—now you're loose!

"But ye can't git away. I'll roll a big rock over that 'ere hole as you can't move; and if ye did git out, you'd never find yer way out o' this woods 'fore doomsday.

"The sun can't send no light into Dark Hollow in the middle o' the brightest summer day.

"There ain't no path over ther mountains.

"There is rivers and rivers o' water runs so powerful *I* can't, nor nobody can't, swim across 'em, and precipices to tumble down the goats can't jump.

"Ony one way, you kin walk off on the water.

"There ain't no boat. Sorry I can't accommodate you.

"Don't you cry, your sweetheart 'll come bimeby. Bloodhounds couldn't track you here, let alone ole Jobson.

"To-morrer we'll norgorate the bride o' Dark Hollow. Good-night, honey—happy be thy dreams!"

He kissed his coarse, dirty hand, and was gone.

Rose heard scarce anything of this drunken, brutal speech, yet gathered vaguely its horrible import.

But, at the allusion to her dear old heart-broken uncle, her second father, she threw herself prostrate on her face, and cried out, so that the horrible vault rang with her anguished accents, and seemed to mock her with blasphemous reverberation: "God, God, God! O God! let me die, let me die!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE FIEND BAFFLED.

"BLOODHOUNDS couldn't track her, let alone poor old Jobson."

The night succeeding the memorable one of Rose's abduction, the sombre valley and black hills surrounding appeared (to the imagination of one superb being, who with demoniacal expression sat like the arch fiend enthroned on a solitary crag instituting the comparison) "like child's play of sparks in burnt paper."

"Bah," sneered Victor; "the country's alive with them. Looking for a bright-eyed little needle, that, if I am not much mistaken, is lost in the hay-stack in the cave, where she's cried herself to sleep by this time."

Truly it did present precisely that look.

Spark after spark in the distance would flash into view, huddled together; zigzagging along in single file, one,

then another, overtaking those in advance; others darting off eccentrically as though to explore heretofore unsuspected localities.

By turns they would seem quenched suddenly, as the bearers clambered down gulches in the hills, or made circuits around interposing crags or other intervening objects, again relit as it were, reappearing when their beams were not intercepted.

"I didn't think Jobson had so much life in him. An old battered hulk of a man-o'-war's-man like that, by Jove, he's up hills and down precipices as though he were climbing rigging, or darting down the hatchway of a fo'castle.

"A lucky hint that of mine about Pimple Hill and the Hudson. I see it's sent the main body off in the very opposite direction.

"One—two—three—only four torches in sight, and they just as apt to light them on the right trail as the countless torches overhead.

"Now's my time to see if that clever rascal Curry has been so successful as he boasts in Grubb's report.

"Ah, my fragrant Moss Rose, we mustn't allow you to 'waste your sweetness on the desert air.'"

So saying, he closed the slide of a dark lantern he carried, and descended the mountain by a path in the direction of the lakes.

As it was not at all likely that this, or any portion of the mountains would be ultimately overlooked, his object was to arrive at the cave before those engaged in the search should penetrate in that direction, and possibly discover some clue to the spot where the lost girl was concealed.

The path for a great part of the way was sufficiently lighted by the moon and stars to enable him to dispense

with the rays of the lantern, a matter of congratulation to the subtle spirit of the sagacious Victor.

For, although the entire male force of the vicinity, with the exception of the extreme juvenile and the aged, halt, or blind, were out on the hills, and each bearing some sort of a light, he did not wish to attract the observation or companionship of any one who might be independent or adventurous enough to select his present route for exploration.

Should he accidentally encounter such an one, he reasoned he could more readily detect him first at a distance, and if need be, turn the slide of his own lantern, proclaim his object and get rid of such intruder at the earliest available opportunity.

He strode along like a professional pedestrian whose ambition it was to make his hundred miles in a hundred hours, as he was thoroughly familiar with the region, which he had before inspected carefully, under pretext of hunting.

By a shorter and even more hazardous route than that Rose's captors had pursued, he succeeded in reaching the dam between the upper and lower lake, and finding the old boat still moored among the bushes where Grubb had left it.

Swearing at the delay it occasioned, he was forced to use his white hands to bale it out with an old tin pail which floated about in it for that purpose.

With no extraordinary effort of that immense strength we know him to possess, he launched the crazy craft, dropped both oars into the rowlocks, and sent the clumsy old "tub" spinning forward over the bosom of the lake with a velocity that would have astonished the miserable tools of his villany, and elicited the admiration of the famous Oxford nine.

Dark Hollow obliged him to open the slide of the lantern he had placed in the bow, and the conical stream of brilliant light shot out through the bull's eye over the inky water, leaving the outline of the boat and its occupant scarcely more perceptible than to be surmised, presented the appearance of some evil genius piloted by *ignis fatuus*, or will o' the wisp, to an assemblage and feast of ghouls.

The phenomena which had startled Curry and his companion only for an instant annoyed Victor.

Arrived at the point between the rocks described by Grubb, he softly blew a small silver whistle he carried in his vest, and extinguished the dark lantern.

A crash was heard in the brushwood about fifty yards off, and soon a gruff voice called out cautiously, as the speaker approached:

"Cap'n?"

"Of course. All right?"

"Right as a trivet."

"'Sleep?"

"Who? me?"

"No, you fool—the girl?"

"Ye-es, I spose so, cap'n. I 'beys orders, I does. Yer know yer told me not to dar for to stay in the same part o' the cave, an' not to go there onless I was sent for. Well, I wa'nt sent for muchly."

"Who's there now? anybody else? the other fellow?"

"Grubb?"

"You know who I mean. Who else could be there? Don't trifle with me, sir."

"Don't be mad, cap'n. Please don't, I'm kind o' mixed up and stoopid long o' keepin' sitch keerful watch day an' night for my brave cap'n. An' 'sides, I had a

orful tough job makin' ther door o' that cave big enough to take ther camp bed an' things in, an' settin' 'em all to rights arterwards. Now everythink looks like a parler, or a bridal chamber."

"Hold your insolent tongue. Did the things get here without attracting attention?"

"Well you sees, cap'n, it was your orders as I shouldn't leave Miss for the present, but Grubb was to go; and when ther things come in ther wagon from Woodford, he was to see 'em all took to your cottage and put in, trumpery like, and when ther crowd as would gather hed all gone away, he was to take 'em all agin in ther same wagon hisself, with the aprons all buttoned down so as no one could see what was in, and drive to the old forge behind Bald Mountain.

"Well, he did so; hirin' the wagon o' the Woodford boy, who's kind o' soft, and when he got to ther forge, he onhitched an' took one o' the old charcoal wagons as no one 'ud suspect seein' it in ther mountains, for they goes where nothin' else kin.

"He smutted his face an' clo'es all up, an' soon he'd the thinks all a-board ther boat, an' here in no time, 'ithout a earthly soul suspectin' they'd left ther cottage."

"Good! But he left some things as I directed?"

"Sartin, cap'n. 'Special all them thinks you bought o' old Todd, and ther thinks he got at the post-office, to make up a pile like."

"Have you minded my orders about that drinking of yours?"

"Cap'n, I hev'nt hed as much to-day as would a pickled a oyster, or one o' Redfern's snakes."

"Show me the way. We don't want the light."

"Jes' so, cap'n; foller me."

"You go in first and strike a light, if it won't show outside."

"Lord bless you, cap'n, that lantern o' yourn 'aint darker on the outside than my cave, an' yit there is four candles a burnin' in the candleleebry this blessed minnit."

"Ah! that's capital! That's capital!"

"You may well say that, cap'n. Ef I was runnin' away from the gallas, there ain't a place I'd go to hide in afore this cave."

"Not at all unlikely—you may be—go in!"

Victor followed. Very little difficulty comparatively was experienced this time, as the entrance had been considerably enlarged. The dense underbrush had been little disturbed, for fear of revealing the existence of the cavern.

This closed behind them with a vigorous angry snap and rebound, proportioned to the force employed in overcoming its resistance.

A rich, blue damask curtain depending from a massive gilt cornice, concealed the mouth of the cave when they had entered.

The atmosphere of the place, although so far beneath the surface of the earth, was by no means damp or cold.

The drainage, from the nature of the surrounding country, was so perfect as to preclude this, and the slight chilliness, which its seclusion from the sunbeams may have engendered, was sufficiently tempered by even the degree of heat diffused from the burning candles, and the presence and breath of its occupants.

On a low, single French bedstead of mahogany, which Curry had termed a camp-bed, lay the hapless Rose, sleeping the sound sleep of utter exhaustion, mental and physical.

One plump, well-rounded arm escaped from the loose sleeve of her summer-dress assisted in the support of her charming little head, which had sunk on one side in the unstudied yet beautiful "abandon" of repose.

The fat, dimpled hand and tapering fingers were twined in the luxuriant braids of her hair, which covered the pillow as with a shower of gold.

Hers, unfortunately for her now, was that sort of temperament which the more it is vexed, exasperated and distressed, renders the possessor only the more maddeningly charming and seductive.

Attractive in repose, excited into a tempest of agitated sobs, sighs and tears, it was absolutely overpowering in its effects upon the basely sensual.

Her rich blood fairly mantled in the plumply rounded cheeks and ripe pouting lips, like a half-opened rose bud, disclosing a double row of perfect teeth, like the milky grains of tender young corn.

Her long, sweeping eyelashes veiling the languishing eyes, now quite sunk in that sleep towards which they ever seemed tending, when not dancing with mirth and coquetry, were wet with tears which trembled and glistened in the light which Victor held, like diamond globules of dew upon the queen of flowers, her namesake.

The rest of her figure was gracefully, yet, oh, how typical of despair and anguish, extended upon the elegant couch, which seemed to throb with sympathy and pity, responsive to the slowly beating heart up-heaving that luxurious bosom.

Even in her sleep sobs would catch that fragrant breath, and unintelligible words of plaint or prayer escape her lips in murmurs.

Not a single emotion of pity was kindled in the breast of Victor.

His heart did beat it is true, and with such violence as to cause his breath to be audible although he spoke not.

He held his hand as though to repress its agitation lest it should awaken her. But Rose slept on in blissful unconsciousness. Howsoever disturbed by visioned horrors that sleep might be, they could bear no comparison with the actual dangers which impended.

"No—no," he murmured; as he withdrew a pace or two, and shielded the light from the eyes of the sleeping beauty. "Not now—at all events—not while that coarse scoundrel is no doubt watching me from his kennel there. I must not speak with her in his presence."

Gliding on tiptoe over the heavy velvet carpet, as though that were needed to make the ever noiseless step unheard, he entered the smaller apartment, and beckoned Curry:

"I want you to take the boat from the bushes where you hid it," he whispered, "and the lantern, which you can light if likely to be disturbed, and reconnoitre (you know what that means?) the lake slowly and carefully as far as the dam, and return to me.

"Mind your eye now Hide everything as carefully afterwards, and take care you're not foxed.

"If you meet anybody, you're searching for the girl, you know.

"If you see any lights on the hills, or hear anything that looks like danger, blow the whistle. Begone!"

"Never fear, cap'n!"

As soon as Curry had left long enough to be out of sound of what might take place within, Victor drew a

navy revolver from a belt beneath his coat, and from each breast-pocket of the same garment a tiny toy of a weapon, termed a Derringer.

Examining each of these as he produced it, he laid them cocked and convenient to his hand on a small round table near Rose's bed.

He then approached her, and spoke in the same tender tones he had used to Blanche, but infinitely more agitated.

"Rose!—Rose!—Miss Moss!"

He had called three times, each time louder, ere Rose opened her eyes, which at last she did with a shudder, and seeing Victor, apparently without recognition, screamed one short, sharp little cry, and closed them instantly.

Poor silly bird, as though that act shut out the danger.

Presently she opened them again to their fullest extent, and gazed earnestly all around her, endeavoring to collect her faculties by passing her hand over her forehead once or twice, and pressing both temples therein, momently veiling her eyes.

When she removed her hand, her glance fell full upon the face of Victor, who stood at a little distance looking curiously at her, and patiently scanning her proceedings.

Bounding from the couch, she threw herself at his feet, and clasping him wildly about the knees, cried out,

"Saved—I am saved! Oh, Mr. Forestal, Heaven has sent you! Thank God—thank God, I am saved!"

As she looked up at him with streaming eyes, her dishevelled hair sweeping the floor where she knelt, her ravishing beauty thrilled every nerve of Victor with mad rapture.

Nevertheless he coldly answered in a measured and meaning tone:

"Safety and freedom, Miss Rose, must depend altogether on yourself and me. Heaven nor hell have anything to do with it."

"You came to rescue me, did you not?" she inquired in a frightened whisper.

"Assuredly, on certain terms."

"Terms!—what terms?—oh, what do you mean? Have pity on me! I am dazed, ill, and cannot understand you. Speak plainly to me, Mr. Forestal, pray, pray do. Where is my uncle? Ah, I know, he is without there; let me fly to him!"

"Stop!"

The voice had in it all the fearful majesty of the arch fiend when he comes in person to claim his blood-sealed bond, and bear with him to perdition the lost human soul.

She sprang to her feet, and tossing aside with either hand the heavy tresses which might impede her view, she stood transfixed an instant, and glaring upon him like a beautiful basilisk.

Satan convoking pandemonium wore not a more bitter, mock-gracious smile, assumed no more royal attitude or bearing than Victor exhibited from pale brow to firmly-planted heel.

"I understand this all now, and your 'terms,'" she hissed between her angry, trembling lips. "*You* are the master, and the vile myrmidons who brought me here were your emissaries."

"How well you divine! 'Tis exactly as you have stated. Now be calm, and hear me. Be seated."

His manner was such a singular blending of the

courtly and persuasive, with the assured divine right of command enforcing obedience, that Rose unconsciously seated herself on the side of the couch, for she disdained accepting the seat he had tendered.

As she did so, he gracefully twirled the chair around, and occupied it himself a few feet distant from her, and looking her calmly in the face, spoke:

"It is my wish and intention to wear the beautiful Moss Rose in my bosom. Therefore I have plucked her, with a little unnecessary violence it may be, from her native parterre. The action, I am pleased to perceive, has by slightly crumpling the leaves, from the little preliminary pressure it has received, only enhanced its attractions, causing it to exhale a few fragrant sighs, and shed a shower of dew-drops which seal its destiny, if I were ever fool enough to hesitate as to its possession.

"I am near twenty-two, which mates capitally with seventeen or eighteen. Is that your age, my pet?

"I am worth somewhere about a million, that is unless the Treasury Department has bursted us up; if it hasn't, then rather more. You are not worth a cent, unless we except the present value of your charms—which is incalculable.

"Altogether it is a fair match.

"Your uncle doesn't know anything about the business, neither does my pa. As we wouldn't marry without their consent, we will have to do the next best thing and suit ourselves—hey, dear?

"You shall never want for money as long as you live, and behave reasonable; and as soon as we become tired of each other, you shall pick out a husband or another lover, tell me his price, and I will pay for him. Surely that is sensible and liberal.

"Do you not think so, my charmer? Is it a bargain? Say yes, and I'll tell my man he needn't come back 'till morning. He's not a friend of yours particularly. You got him knocked down once by your bully, John Watt.

"Come, is it a bargain? Why do you not speak? Shall I compel an answer, Rosebud?"

Still she did not speak.

Her eyes were fixed on his in stony horror, but evidently for some time she had not followed the insulting, bantering speech he there brought to an end.

For the first time in her life, under trying circumstances, of all which circumstances these were the worst conceivable, she did not lose her self-possession in the least.

Not a particle of confusion obscured her ideas. In the actual presence of worse, far worse than death, she, to her astonishment and transport, found herself absolutely clairvoyant.

Every incident in the remotest degree relating to this episode, from the very first moment of her casual meeting with the splendid villain to the instant his lips ceased to vibrate with the vile harangue he had mockingly addressed to her, flashed upon her mind as light from heaven on persecuting Saul.

It was manifest to her in an instant why and wherefore she had always dreaded and avoided this glittering death that would fain have dazzled and inveigled her to ruin, and, now grown desperate, had sought, by violence and outrage, the accomplishment of his deliberate-planned villany

She knew him at last, thoroughly as he knew himself, and the circumstances, which always make or mar, developed her spirit with chemical rapidity.

In that moment she felt herself equal to the occasion; her soul was in arms, and eager for the fray.

While she cast one quick, stealthy glance around her, the direction of her gaze hidden completely beneath her long, sweeping lashes, a shrill whistle sounded outside, and Victor leaped to the entrance of the cavern to ascertain its purport.

With the rapidity of thought she darted to the table, seized the revolver, and secreted it beneath the mattress of the bed, and with a deadly, tiny Derringer at full-cock, firmly grasped in each hand, she awaited his return.

Her heart beat, like a caged bird against his bars, the moments of Victor's absence.

He did not at once return.

Heaven inspired her with immediate desperate decision.

Still armed, and lithe and agile as a tigress, she crouched and sprang through the opening of the cave, expecting to be felled to the earth by her inhuman hunters ere she could emerge from "the jaws of death, the very mouth of hell," for such it seemed to her.

Victor was not ten paces from her.

She stood a solitary moment, levelled one of the deadly little weapons unerringly at his heart, and the next instant the heavy, horrid ball would have crashed through that abode of devilish crime, tearing away every vestige of that organ, which, in him, was nothing else than a semblance and a cheat.

Fortunately in that instant she perceived that the light which revealed him to her aim, proceeding from the bull's-eye of a dark-lantern, in the hands of a companion, served, by the limited direction of its rays, to

cast her into deeper shadow, and altogether conceal her where she stood.

With an aspiration of gratitude to heaven, she turned and fled up the hills with the silence and celerity of a heron pursued by hawks.

Escaped, thank fortune, escaped!

CHAPTER XII.

AN IDEA.

ON the afternoon of the third day after leaving Millburn, John Watt, carpet-bag in hand, walked up Cortlandt street into Broadway, New York city.

Although so long buried in the isolated village where we made his acquaintance, sterling old John did not appear to be rustically disconcerted by its vast public works, miles of magnificent buildings, leagues of roaring thoroughfares, colossal commerce, or the ubiquitous presence of its million and a quarter of inhabitants.

Either John had been there before, or had become habituated to the great cities "across the waters."

He had but expended one long, preoccupied gaze upon the crowd of sail upon the rivers, the puffing, busy tugs, the crossing and re-crossing ferry-boats, the forest of masts, big ships and steamboats, Trinity spire looming up so gracefully, the dome of the City Hall, Castle Garden, and the crowded Brooklyn shores, and then pursued the uneven tenor of his way, avoiding the base, until he reached, by Broadway and the yellow cars, Bleecker street, No. 176.

Here he handed his carpet-bag to a servant, and was shown to a modest front room in the third story.

It was too late that day for Wall street, and Father Millburn's solicitor, whom he proposed to see as soon as practicable, but in time for dinner, which the gong announced just as he had given the last turn of the comb through his curly head and great beard, and released an imprisoned end of his blue neck-tie.

John followed in the stream of well-dressed and well-bred ladies and gentlemen who were decorously proceeding to the dining-room, receiving accessions *en route* from the suites of apartments and passages bordering the stairways.

The meal being over, at length, and the majority of the guests, about forty in number, having departed, he left the table and lit his cigar, among other smokers, in the veranda.

It was yet only five o'clock, when he threw away the stump and started out for a stroll.

Once on the pave, the human tide bore him along, and in a few minutes he found himself on Broadway, and but a short distance from Washington Square.

As sunset was approaching, and he felt both fatigued and depressed, he concluded to enter its walks, and amid its quiet seclusion, seated on one of the benches which surround the simple but graceful fountain, revolve his plans for the morrow—for the future.

The song birds haunting the green boughs overhead or fluttering down the broad and shaded walks, the lint-white, robin and golden-crested oriole, mingled with sparrows of tamer hue, but equally pleasant voices, balancing themselves, by hundreds, on chips in the basin of the fountain, were infinitely more in consonance with his

feelings than the crush of Broadway, or the stately brown-stone magnificence of Fifth Avenue.

Its one-mile marvel of grandeur had its beginning from the northern centre of the square

Many a nurse-maid walked her unwilling little charge back and forth beneath his unobservant eyes as he sat there, vexed to find at last, that her second-hand airs and graces were all lost upon the fine-looking stranger.

Every thought of John's had Blanche for its centre; in whatsoever direction they originally set out, he found them like "blessings coming home to roost." And said roost was the snug little nest at the foot of Bald Mountain, far away at Millburn.

Had John had the re-naming of the stars and planets, he would have called that one of the Pleiades, around which the Universe, including our world, is said to revolve, "Blanche"—"Blanche Millburn," and he felt satisfied astronomers were perfectly right in there locating the garden of Eden.

Poor, banished Adam felt very sad and lonely, and thought very bitterly of the serpent tempter Victor endeavoring to dispossess him.

Not that he deemed himself entitled, but the conviction was clear to his mind, that the success of Victor could never be for the happiness of the first of her sex.

Sigh on, dear John, to-day, but to-morrow is for work.

You can, at all events, discharge the filial duty of extricating Father Millburn from the toils and meshes of the father, whatever becomes of the hapless lady-bird at the hands of the son, even though you may never reap Jacob's reward for your long service.

Be satisfied with administering to her, and her poor

old father, one drop of comfort from the well where you are only the hewer of wood and drawer of water.

The disappearance of the sun, and increase of the noisy, careless throng, led him to quit the square and return to his lodgings.

. . . . . .

Over a week had passed, and notwithstanding the advantage he possessed of acquaintance with one or two of the wealthiest capitalists on Change, who evidently held him in the most respectful, not to say obsequious esteem—which was unaccountable, this deference of wealth to unquestionable poverty—John had made no progress whatever.

In vain he displayed his diagrams, and plans, and specimens, and vouchers, and exhausted his practical eloquence, and native good sense and manners.

Not one of those adventurous spirits would touch it.

"This smelting business, when one don't understand it, is a risky thing, and one *might* burn his fingers, you know."

What was the use of his assuring them that he understood it, knew all about it, and would guarantee a return in an incredible short time of a percentage of profit, beyond anything which could offer elsewhere.

Evidently, adverse interests were clandestinely at work to thwart his efforts.

He rapped his head smartly, in approval of this shrewd suspicion, and sought Father Millburn's solicitor again, to lay this idea before him.

Of course, Blanche's father had been written to daily, on the subject of his progress, or want of progress, first having been advised to take the good Dr. Daws into his confidence, so as to conceal the matter, for the present, from the knowledge even of Blanche.

The solicitor was one of that very numerous class of legal advisers, not without their counterpart in the medical profession, who eagerly accept and adopt the suggestions of an applicant, and by expatiating upon it, starting objections here and there, and arguing them away with great show of technical learning, citing authorities, precedents, etc., with much logical ingenuity, persuade, first the bewildered client or patient, and afterwards themselves, that they were the originators of the proposition.

John had not much faith in the advice obtained from this source, but the sincere friendship which the solicitor evidenced for Father Millburn, and uncommon zeal he displayed in his service, induced him to hope that possibly from the midst of whole bushels of chaff some few grains of sense might be sifted.

Then, certainly, the solicitor knew the town and its business men better than he could. The lengthy conversation between them terminated by the former saying:

"My dear sir, depend upon it, it is as I have proven to you. You are convinced, I hope? Some person or persons unknown have been tampering with the parties in this case, unduly influencing their minds, undoubtedly biasing their decision in the premises, and most probably, as I have argued to show you, sedulously avoiding all overt actions, have covertly sought to effect his or their interested ends, even to the extent of possible bribery and corruption in their accomplishment. What do *you* think?"

Well—John thought so too. He had at first.

Disappointed this time, as he feared he would be, he shook hands with the solicitor—a Mr. Theodore Dalton—and walked towards the St. Nicholas, cogitating, half concluding to examine the register of guests, the

Directory—what not—to see if something would not suggest something else.

Fact is, John was temporarily nonplussed, tired and jaded, for he had walked considerable that day, and sustained several trying interviews, with no good result.

He crossed Broadway without further mishap than knocking down a boy with a stringful of inflated pink, blue and yellow india rubber balloons, who ran against him, seeking escape from the high-mettled coursers attached to a splendid turn-out from Fifth Avenue, at the moment it met face to face a span of poor, broken-down hacks, dragging an omnibus staggering with its load of passengers.

The boy anathematized him, saying—"Yer did it a purpose, ole Stonewall—yer've busted my balloons, and yer've busted my head too!" When John reached the other sidewalk, and could attract the fellow's eye, through the throng, he beckoned and to the lad's amazement—for Watt was kind hearted as a woman—gave him a fifty cent note to repair damages.

Unperceived by the donor, the recipient, as he moved off, having thanked him by a scrape of his foot, with the forefinger of his disengaged hand pulled down the corner of his eye until the red was visible, said, confidentially, to a half dozen others who had come, from nobody knows where, to witness the result,

"Greeny!—busted 'em myself! But it don't pay to run ag'in him—thought it was a house."

Before night it was all over the Fourteenth ward, among the boys, that a "stranger at the St. Nicholas gev a boy half a dollar to run ag'in him."

The boys who heard it supposed it was some celebrated "racer," as Weston was a "walker."

There was no name on the list of arrivals at the hotel which possessed the slightest interest for him, so our friend entered the reading-room and ran his eyes over the files of daily papers.

He had not read a paper, scarcely looked at one since his arrival in the city, so otherwise occupied had his attention been day and night.

It is not a matter of surprise consequently, the following advertisement in the *Herald* had not before attracted his attention.

☞ "$500 REWARD!!! Any information whatever, concerning the whereabouts of Miss Rosa Moss, of the village of Millburn, County of ——, State of ——, whether she is dead or alive, will be thankfully received, and the above reward cheerfully paid by her distressed uncle. She was forcibly seized and abducted by two disguised ruffians unknown, on the night of the 20th ult., and has not been seen or heard of since."

Here followed her description, and instructions to address Dr. George Daws, Millburn P. O., —— county, State of ——."

John threw down the files with a bang, which caused twenty startled readers to look up with surprise, and stalking straight off as he could go to the bar-room of the hotel, called for brandy, poured out and drank half a tumbler, was called back to pay for it, which he had forgotten to do, and left immediately for Bleecker street.

As he went along he commenced talking to himself in an excited manner; not, however, the result of the brandy, the like quantity of which he had never before been known to consume at one time. He did not any more feel its effects, except to brace him under the tremendous mental shock he had received, than if it had

been a glass of fresh, country milk from the fat, dimpled fingers of the unfortunate Rose herself.

"Ten days ago," John muttered—"ten days ago. She must be dead—worse than dead. Better be dead. Oh, if she is only dead! Poor, poor little Rose—and they never wrote me a word about it. This must be attended to first of all now. Let me think."

And, thinking, John strode along Bleecker street into the door of No. 176, and up to his third story apartment without answering a single question from landlady or servants, who were alarmed at his pale face and fierce demeanor.

He had scarcely turned the key in the door and seated himself, with arm resting on a little stand, to continue his "thinking" uninterruptedly, when three smart raps on his door induced him growlingly to rise and open it.

A waiter with a card on a salver stood there bowing respectfully.

"Hum! a visitor—and to *me*—let's see who it is?" muttered John. He lifted the irreproachable pasteboard and read, "Col. C. C. Forestal."

"Where is the gentleman?"

"In the parlor, sir."

"I will go down to him."

"Yes, sir."

The model waiter bowed himself out of sight, and Watt slightly adjusting his dress, hastened to the parlor on the floor beneath.

As he entered, the visitor arose, and nodded stiffly—rather arrogantly.

"Your name is Watt?"

"Your name is Forestal?"

"You have my card, sir!"

"I have the card of a gentleman, and the name inscribed is Col. Forestal; if you wish, sir, to persuade me that you are that gentleman, it will be indispensable for you to lay aside this insolent assumption on a first approach to my acquaintance."

So much for John.

"Is it not enough, sir, that I have condescended to visit you here, that I am to be insulted in addition by your ridiculous pretensions to consideration which you do not merit? Who am I, sir, pray? and who are you?"

"Col. Forestal, if that is your name; if you are the person whose name has been mentioned to me of late in connection with the affairs of my venerable friend, Mr. Millburn, I am sorry, if we must meet, that we should do so in the spirit in which this interview has been conducted. It is no fault of mine. Will you be seated, sir?"

"Ah! now, sir, you appear to be coming to your senses."

He sat down and awaited a reply. John took a chair near the window and resumed:

"I shall take the liberty of freely expressing myself concerning this intrusion, and your unwarrantable conduct, sir, before you leave this house, the hospitalities of which you have outraged. You appear to be ignorant, or oblivious of the meaning of the saying, that 'an Englishman's house is his castle.' You have rudely invaded mine, sir, and must take the consequences."

"A truce to this nonsense, boy. Men of my position, age and habits have no time to consume in such absurdity. Why did you not call upon me in Wall street, or at my residence, as I requested in a note I caused to be addressed you severa. days ago?"

"I received no note from you, or any one in your name."

"Then, by the Lord, sir, I will hold those fellows at the post-office responsible for this. I will see that at least a dozen of them are sent packing, or I have no influence with the government, that's all. You got no note?"

"I got no note, sir, and I take occasion to say, that had I done so I should not have called."

"Do I understand you, boy, to say that you would have refused to call upon me as instructed?"

"I receive no instructions, sir, except from those in whose interests I am employed. I do not recognize you as having authority to direct my movements, or, indeed, occupy my time at all. Was it your purpose in driving up to my humble door in state, and by the assumption of airs, such as I will not trust myself to characterize, to seek to deter me from the zealous and faithful discharge of my duty to my friend? If so, the sooner your footmen assist you into your coach, and your liveried vassal on the box drives you back again, the sooner will this useless interview be terminated. I have no more time or taste for it than you have."

Forestal bounced out of his chair at this, and, despite the gout, which caused him to drag one slightly paralytic leg after the other, took one or two angry turns up and down the apartment, rattling his heavy gold seals in his trembling fingers, rubbing his red nose and purple cheeks, or violently twirling his gold eye-glass by the guard about his plethoric neck.

"Sir—sir—sir, this is—this is—intolerable!" he gasped. "Come at once to the point, for, by the Lord, sir, this is the last chance you or your beggarly master

shall have to trifle with Christopher Forestal, sir. With me—with *me*—a man worth millions—worth *millions*, sir; who could buy and sell the whole beggarly State in which *he* holds scarcely an interest, with him thrown in the bargain, and you too, sir—you too, sir."

The colonel did not possess the *sang froid* of his polished and accomplished son Victor.

John Watt sat still in his chair, and Mr. Turveydrop, the master of deportment, could not have set a better example of genteel behavior than did John to the irate colonel.

When the other had subsided into only occasional snorts of rage, John calmly said:

"The point—that is what I wish to arrive at. What did you come here for? Let me hear it."

"Is that old man going to pay me back my money?"

"Yes."

"All of it?"

"All to which you are entitled. A part to which you were not entitled you have withheld already."

"Have a care, sir, have a care, sir. You may smart for this."

"I know of what I am speaking. You can indict me for libel as soon as you please. I will repeat what I have said in the presence of as many witnesses as you may desire."

"Have you any of this money now? Dalton said you had, probably."

"Will to-morrow do?"

"No, sir, I'll not wait a day—an hour. I must have it, and a large portion too, right away, or I will seize the roof from over the hoary old rascal's head, and he and his beggarly daughter may go tramping the country like gip—"

"Silence, sir!" thundered John, interrupting the purse-proud, passionate old man.

"Silence, sir! Not another such word from your lips, or I shall forget myself, and your age, and—and—"

"And what, sir, what, sir?"

"Do that I should be sorry for. I will bear no allusions to that noble young lady, not conceived in the respectful terms she merits."

"Hoity toity!—young man, I was wrong. I spoke hastily—I was young once myself."

"Enough, sir. Your money, or a large part of it, shall be forthcoming to-morrow."

"Then I must wait. See that you do not fail me, sir, or the law shall take its course."

Not waiting for the servant, for whom John rung to show him out, the once handsome, now gouty and plethoric old Crœsus, pampered by high living and fashionable dissipation of every kind, hobbled out of the apartment, down the stairs to the door, and was handed into his splendid equipage by two gorgeously-dressed footmen, who banged to the door, jumped on behind, and the mettlesome bays carried it rumbling and flashing into Broadway.

"To-morrow, to-morrow!" soliloquized John, as with his eyes he followed the departure from the window of his room.

"Where is the money to come from, I wonder? Poor Blanche, dear Blanche!" and with the beloved name he struck his open hand upon his forehead—a familiar gesture—and struck a brilliant idea at the same time, which caused him to dance and caper all around the room with ridiculous extravagance.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TEMPTATION ON THE MOUNTAIN.

TEN days had elapsed and Rose Moss had not been seen or heard of since that fatal night.

Blanche wept and pined, not so much for the mere presence of her friend and confidant, although she missed her greatly, but reflecting on the horrible possibilities of her fate had brought about such a condition of her nervous system as gave the good Dr. Daws serious uneasiness.

"No use to fret, my child—no use to fret—won't make it better—won't mend the matter—will be heard of soon—*must* be. Make you ill too—make you ill certain—how's the pulse?—digestion right? Must send you a tonic. Keep cheerful company—go driving with young Forestal—lively fellow—will make you laugh. God bless you—good-by!"

Blanche could not avoid seeing also that her dear old father was slowly but certainly failing. She watched his every change of color, mood, and tone of voice with the solicitude of a devoted Christian daughter.

He had relapsed into his old melancholy, and she could not divine the cause.

That it was connected with John Watt and Dr. Daws, or that at least they were in the confidence from which she was excluded, she suspected from several slight occurrences; nothing apart, but considered in the aggregate, they assumed such consequence in her eyes that she endeavored to extract from the old doctor, by all the artifices of her sex, confirmation or denial of her con-

jectures. It was easy enough to get the entire contents of the doctor's snuff-box by consecutive pinches, but the rack and thumbscrew could not get him to give up a confided secret to improper keeping; which he held to be anybody's not specially authorized to receive it.

Therefore, Blanche found it, as the doctor said, "barking up the wrong tree;" extract of Peruvian bark couldn't extract it. "My dear, I'm like the 'needy knife-grinder'—story, bless you, I've none to tell."

That was all the satisfaction she obtained.

John Watt never wrote to *her*.

Of course not; poor John would never have presumed to do that. He worshipped his divinity far off,

"Beloved star,
Thou art so near,
And yet so far,"

was a favorite of John's, but he never tried to sing it. He was not constructed for singing.

How came Blanche to think about him? Why, I don't know. He was away attending to father's business. And he was always so undemonstratively kind and attentive to him and to her, for father's sake, no doubt.

And it must be he who wrote all those letters father was so anxious to get, that he took his hat and cane and walked over to Dr. Daws' when the doctor didn't come to him early enough to suit his impatience.

And when was he coming home? only that father's anxiety might be sooner removed, and the mining affairs attended to. The men did not get along so well without the superintendent.

These were Blanche's thoughts. And there could be no significance in such.

Really the poor girl must have given up altogether,

for her spirits were at a very low ebb, were it not for the unremitting attentions, the constant presence of Victor.

He was so kind, so good, so thoughtful, so considerate, so sympathetic and consoling.

Then he was so intelligent—intellectual indeed—with such a fund of anecdote and adventure, quip, quirk and quotation, made such brilliant *mots*, and laughed *at* them with such brilliant eyes and teeth, that, in fact, he was absolutely charming.

And the serpent knew it.

He was drawing his shining folds closer and closer around his prey. All the magnetism of his nature was darted in an incessant stream through those fascinating eyes, and the flatteries and sugar-coated poisons which that envenomed tongue distilled, seemingly innocuous as the honey of Hybla, was sufficient to strike dead the purity and character of a score of ordinary maidens.

But Blanche, though she thought him sometimes a little queer, and free in his opinions and manner of expressing them, attributed it altogether to his indisputable intellectual power undergoing development.

His genius, flashing around the lofty crags and turrets, sought to obscure with its dazzling light the horrid repulsive gulfs and chasms, where lurked devouring death and danger.

Victor was progressing swimmingly in his own opinion.

Shakespeare's Richard the Third had not a more deliberate reflective soul for the concoction and commission of villany than the beautiful Victor Forestal, who was physically Richard's complete opposite. One all deformity, the other symmetry itself.

The doctor's kind suggestion was anticipated by Vic-

tor's invitation of this day. He remarked that "the weather was as propitious for a drive as though it had been bespoken," and informed Blanche that his "cattle were suffering for the want of exercise." So he had taken the liberty, as her father would be gone all the morning in the village upon business, and otherwise she would be left alone, to bring his ponies around. Would she take a seat in his phaeton, and he would convey her in the direction of the zinc mines.

The workmen would be the better for a sight of the future proprietress. Nothing like the eye of the master or mistress for these slaves of the lamp, my dear.

As her father also urged her, Blanche soon arrayed herself suitably, and they dashed up the road in a shower of dust, attracting to doors, windows and gates the occupants of the cottages on their route.

As they passed the slow moving mineral wagons, heavily freighted with ore, or its product in various stages of manufacture, Blanche smilingly nodded her recognition of the respectful touch of the cap of the grimy drivers as they drew their lumbering teams one side to allow her the freedom of the road.

"Dear Blanche, these poor creatures seem much attached to you."

"They are grateful souls, and very little kindness impresses them."

"Ah! you think so. I fear you do not know the '*canaille*' as I do."

"You wrong them, Victor. Your kind heart is too easily soured by the exhibition of ingratitude. With your vast means of doing benevolent actions, and generous impulsive temperament, which, in one so poor as I, would be criminal extravagance, you have, no doubt,

met with frequent cases of ingratitude. But I beg you not to conclude too hastily that they are all alike."

"Darling, I believe constant association with you would enable me, in time, to wipe out many bitter memories."

Here, the hypocrite grew moody, and heaved a genuine sigh—memory was busy with him.

The silence which succeeded caused the innocent Blanche to feel increased pity for the "noble nature" which suffering and disappointment by the inscrutable processes of Providence had already done so much towards sublimating.

"He is the genuine gold," thought loving Blanche; "if any dross remains, age with its calm reflection will detach the last particle of alloy, and he will become a shining example, worthy at least of the adoration of poor, inferior mortals like myself. All that he needs is grace, and that comes by prayer."

And didn't the pure angel pray for him, day and night? Aye, that did she and so did her pious, patriarchal father.

We will see how those prayers were answered.

They stopped at the mine; making a short cut across the valley for the purpose, over a bridge or two, past a mill or two, and between low stone walls on the dusty road, where the mineral wagons became more numerous, until the smoke-stack of the works towered high above them and the surrounding collection of wooden sheds.

Here Victor created his usual impression, among the busy, sooty miners.

He appeared to have come fresh crammed from an encyclopædia, so *au fait* did he exhibit himself on the subject of mines, miners, mining, and the manufacture of mineral ore.

Blanche was charmed, interested and instructed. So were the hands, and under-bosses themselves, such as he spoke with, or in their hearing.

They were all officious to serve the visitors. Not altogether either, as heretofore, on account of Miss Blanche. The "shining example" who accompanied her had so flatteringly dispensed his marvellous knowledge, that he had mortified nobody with a sense of previous ignorance.

It was all done by asking questions, purposely blundering sometimes, and permitting them to set him right with captivating modesty. Such accurate knowledge as he possessed and meant to impart, he did, by attributing it to other miners, at more extensive works, who had told him a deal more, which he had forgotten, but he perceived they knew, with one or two exceptions he begged to be pardoned for mentioning. And if he was wrong, pray set him right.

"We are all poor scholars, you know—all learning. What one doesn't know another can teach him—it is our duty. You know one thing better than I do, I know another. Now this is not my business at all—my business is money. I shall be thankful for information. I love knowledge."

Oh, what an elegant fellow he was! "So modest," "and so wise," "and so rich," "and so handsome!" "What a splendid owner he will be when Miss Blanche gets him." "He'll make the mines hum, I tell you; he's got more money now than you can shake a stick at."

When the shining example got back in his phaeton, alongside of Blanche, and went ambling and glittering along until hid in the dust of the main road, he "had won golden opinions from all sorts of persons."

Work was not resumed after his departure, to any great extent, for full fifteen minutes.

Blanche and he talked about Rose—"poor Rose." Blanche moved to tears, and the tear even stood in Victor's fine eyes, which, to Blanche, lent him the very last finishing touch as her ideal of a man—sensibility.

He was, indeed, a bright and a shining light. There was no hiding him under a bushel. Had he been ill-favored in person, or poor as a church mouse, Blanche would have been his companion mouse, when he should ask her, and go to that church with him.

She thought, and blushed with pride and maiden delicacy as she thought, looking at the keen and slily observant Victor—

> "Thou, for *my* sake at Christian shrine,
> And I—at *any* god's, for thine!"

Blanche was not prepared, perhaps, to go the full extent of this couplet, but she thought of it as approaching pretty near to her present sentiments.

No, the dear girl was deeply and unfeignedly religious. Something which Victor with all his shrewdness and knowledge could not perceive, because he did not believe in it. He regarded religion as a mere matter of opinion, as the result of accidental situation, the inculcation of one-sided ignorance—opinions were caught like the measles. As for himself he had no opinion—save of himself—which he was not prepared to change on the satisfactory production of a better or a more convenient one.

As for religion, he had not so much as the cows—they grunt a prayer when they lie down, he never did.

He took her religion to be frigidity, and expected it to be thawed and disappear at the fitting moment before the hot breath of his licentious passion.

When they had together wept over the mysterious fate of Rosa Moss, Victor, who had had quite enough of the subject, changed it to one which could not fail to be of more interest to both. It was—themselves.

"Dear Blanche, we will get out here, fasten the horses to a tree, and walk around by a path I will show you, to a point which commands a charming view of all the lakes. The horses could not go there, and we shall have to return this way. Besides, I have something of the last interest to tell you, which vitally concerns your father, and us both, dear girl." And he lifted her out.

It was coming. Blanche knew it, and trembled so that Victor gave her additional support by gently grasping her arm above the elbow with his other hand, and holding her firmly until her agitation subsided.

Until this moment Blanche had not dreamed that Victor meant this day to propose.

There was something in the young man's look, tone, and manner that she had never seen in him before.

A foreshadowing of an event not far off. He was silent to that degree, and for a length of time which became almost unendurably oppressive. And yet she feared by the slightest sound or movement to precipitate that occurrence which she felt was inevitable.

Like a traveller crossing an Alpine pass, she dared not emit a sound, or hazard a gesture, lest she should be crushed beneath the impending avalanche. This her imagination suggested at mid-summer, and in a region where such calamities were never known—could never be—and yet she shuddered, and her heart stood still with awful presentiment of unknown danger.

"Blanche! Blanche! go back, Blanche! Return—fly for your life!" rang in her brain from countless

voices blended in one tender, tearful, frantic warning chorus.

"Blanche, *dear* Blanche, go back—go back—fly, fly for your life!" and yet she saw no one but Victor, who had not spoken, and still she advanced, till the voices died out into lamentation, and the rustling of the thickening forest, the crunching gravel beneath their feet, and the hissing of foaming waterfalls, like angry envenomed serpents, were all the sounds she heard.

And yet Victor had not spoken. What revelation could this be that was so awfully heralded?

Again and again Blanche shuddered. She tried to reason herself out of this horrible feeling, but could not.

Why, this should be the happy moment of her life. This was that which she had vaguely looked forward to, which was to crown her life with rapture and pride. Did all young maidens feel thus when the critical moment of their lives approached?

She must be ill—perhaps was about to swoon. Those voices—surely they were only a delusion. A momentary delirium.

"Courage, Blanche!" It was Victor who spoke, and yet so identical were his with the words that moment in her mind that it awakened the superstition slumbering in all our natures, and startled her into the exclamation:

"I am—I am frightened!"

"You are chilled. It is damp among these trees. Wrap your cape about you close. Patience, we will soon be out of the woods, in the sunshine on the plateau, then you can rest."

For the first time since they met his voice had failed to assure her.

"Let us return."

"Nonsense, darling; there is nothing to fear. Am not I with you?"

A few moments more and they emerged in the warm sunlight, and she sank weariedly into a seat upon the mossy trunk of a huge tree, which lay just as it had been felled by the woodman in the previous autumn. It was still undetached from the root, and with all its branches remaining, it was sustained at an angle and elevation which adapted it to its present use.

Victor stood beside her, and, not without a certain abstracted air, pointed out the beauties of the landscape.

The clustering lakes, islands, and mountain summits, like an unrolled map, were extended at their feet.

There were the upper and lower crystal lakes, gleaming and glorious in light and shadow, and there, draped as it were in mourning plumes of dense foliage, lay hidden the mysterious precincts of Dark Hollow.

As Blanche looked in that direction that same inexplicable feeling came over her, and again that icy shudder crept through her veins.

"You are ill, dearest!" half asserted, half inquired Victor.

"No; it is nothing. Shall we return now?"

"Soon, love. When the object for which I sought this spot is accomplished.

"Will you forgive me, dearest, if in entering into necessary explanations I am unavoidably compelled to allude to subjects and matters which, I am sure, will pain and alarm you?

"Be assured, darling, I will not cause you one pang which I would not rather bear a thousand-fold alone. I say alone, for, dear Blanche, heaven knows I share every emotion of your heart, whether it be of pleasure or pain.

"I will not keep you in further suspense. Believe me, dearest, it is not now an idle inquiry such as an unfledged boy is fond of asking, and takes the reply home with him to dream upon, as though it were a bit of wedding-cake, but a mature, grown man's serious question, which must immediately decide his future, and remotely seal his fate.

"DO YOU LOVE ME?"

"O Victor—you know—can you—"

"Yes; I know. We have talked of love a thousand times, and thought and dreamed of love. I have sworn countless times that I adore you, and I do. You have shown me by look and tone and manner all that a modest, bashful young maiden may of her heart; but that is not enough. How could I, or any one, presume to act only upon general assurances? In ordinary flirtations it has always been that

"'Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,'

but what I desire is a direct, explicit, and unmistakable answer to a final question:

"Blanche, do you love me?"

"Yes!"

"More, *more*, dear girl!"

"I do, God knows I do!"

"Darling—my life, my soul, my own dear, dear Blanche!" And so they murmured one another's names, and a rapturous kiss was stolen, which Blanche could not, or did not prevent.

"The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
The birds sang love on every spray."

At length it became necessary to repress his ardor. With burning cheek and humid eyes, for tears of hap-

piness filled them, Blanche withdrew herself resolutely from his too ardent embrace, and hung her head, modestly and chastely ashamed, as Victor held her hand in one of his, and encircled her waist lightly with an arm.

Had she—could she but have looked up and seen that strange expression on his face, that look of mingled Satanic triumph, lustful rage, and cowardly hesitation.

But she did not look up, and the warning voices in the air no longer cried:

"Fly, fly, dear Blanche, fly for your life!"

Had her good angels deserted her, or had they gone to seek mortal aid?

"Listen, dearest, and bear my communication with all the resolution of which I deem you capable.

"You know that my father would not hear of my marriage with you, or in fact any untitled lady, unless she could endow her husband with as many or more millions than he is likely to attain. Unfortunately he is devoted to the acquisition of money, and views the want of it—of a vast amount of it, indeed—as almost a criminal offence.

"Thank heaven, darling, I am different.

"He has risen to what he is from nothing by money; has never travelled out of the sphere which it controls, and, of course, has formed—well, an ignorant and exaggerated estimate of its almighty consequence.

"I have travelled the world over and find other things justly more in request, and valued higher.

"Nevertheless I cannot convince his sixty-five winters with my twenty-two or three summers.

"He has already determined I shall marry a certain English countess, who was somewhat partial to me when

abroad, in order that she may give the family that only which he thinks it would be the better for—high birth, nobility.

"I need not say to you, darling, I have no intention of being made use of in the furtherance of any one's plans except my own.

"At the same time, were I openly to tell him that I shall not marry this haughty countess, whom I detest, if I did not despise, for the manner in which she threw herself at the 'Yankee and his dollars,' and that I will have no one but my own dear Blanche, whose simple heart outweighs coronets or thrones, why the result would be he'd leave me his dying curse, and his money to strangers.

"Well, dear, I could do without the money, with what I have and can make, but the curse, a father's curse, is not to be thought of a moment.

"But here, darling—but for our recent understanding—comes the saddest part of all.

"Your father owes money."

"*My* father?"

"Your father owes money—"

"To whom?"

"To everybody, for aught I know, but principally to my father."

"That accounts for his distress and agitation, his illness, and decline. Poor, poor dear father. What can be done, Victor, tell me?"

"I will. The sums he owes my father are the heaviest, if not the total amount of all he owes. Certainly all, as far as I have any knowledge. Though there may be other and less indebtedness.

"Well, that which is due my father is secured by

various mortgages, deeds of trust, etc., the nature of which, dearest, you are not presumed to understand.

"The provisions of those instruments have not been complied with as from time to time they matured, for which various reasons were assigned, and special indulgences asked and granted.

"Renewals were permitted of many notes, the interest on which had not been paid, the amount simply added to that for which they were originally given, and new papers executed to represent them.

"Not to fatigue and confuse you, darling, with business details which must only distress you, the present *status* of things is this:

"Your father has not, nor can he obtain, more money to meet his notes overdue, and even protested in several instances.

"Therefore, the colonel, my father, I grieve to inform you, thinks himself obliged—certainly is entitled to foreclose, and all your dear father's possessions, including the zinc works, and even the homestead in which, I believe, both he and you were born, is about to be sold, and at a sacrifice.

"In the present unprecedented stagnation of the market this would be—*will* be, unless *you* avert it—utter, irretrievable ruin to your father, and at his advanced age a broken heart and certain death."

"Oh, Victor, Victor, Victor, forbear! But you said I avert it; *how* can I avert it? In the name of Heaven let me know, and were it by the sacrifice of soul and body, how gladly, oh, how proudly would I throw myself under the crushing weight of your cruel father's—"

"Dear Blanche, he is my father!"

"Forgive me, dear, dear Victor. What can I do? tell me—tell me at once!"

"I have great influence with my father in money matters, in everything except what relates to that unfortunate monomania of his, a titled marriage.

"In fact, much of the money he has advanced to your father for carrying on the works, forges, distillery, mills, etc., I have no doubt whatever has come immediately out of my pocket. Father would rather use any paw than his own to gather his chestnuts—not that he is afraid of burning them in this instance, but simply from the force of habit. It seems to give him more satisfaction.

"I do not tell you this, dear Blanche, to enhance my claims to your gratitude, or impress you with any sense of obligation to me. There is none whatever. At other times I command his available funds, should I require them, and find my own 'tied up,' as it is called. Your father is a very old man, dearest—I wish not to pain you—and cannot last above five or ten years at the longest.

"How much better, then, to suffer this incubus of debt to be removed; his possessions left to him to occupy and amuse his declining life, rather than permit him, on the verge of fourscore years, to be driven forth from his peaceful hermitage, shelterless and penniless in the bleak world, without a friendly arm to lean upon, except his daughter's, whose very beauty and defencelessness would be certain to invite the dangers from which they should alone be sufficient to protect her."

"Victor! Victor!"

"Pardon me, my darling; I but present the consequences sure to arise unless you have the courage and self-abnegation to prevent them."

"Me—still me—always me. Alas, alas, what—what can I do? Poor, poor old father!"

"Listen. I must be in London by Christmas, in Paris by spring; what is it to prevent you accompanying me thither?—"

"I—I—"

"One moment more. As I have said, I can furnish the means to enable your father to pay his debts, and afford him a liberal surplus to further develop his enterprises. Watt can return and take up his abode temporarily with your father. He will also have old Mammy and Lucy, who are accustomed to his ways, to watch over and wait upon him at all times. You can state—which is strictly true—that your anxiety concerning your friend Rose is very great. That you feel confident by going in person to New York for a short time, you could—woman as you are—institute and stimulate by your presence, measures more likely to result in obtaining traces of her, than could by any possibility be accomplished in this obscure locality with the benighted and befogged instruments you would be obliged to employ."

"Would you have me deceive my father? Where is the necessity?"

"Wait! There will be surprise and objection expressed, which you will have to resolutely combat, insisting that you have made up your mind, and meeting their most reasonable and probable discouragement, by informing them you will go under my escort, and accompanied by Jennie Spry, who is about to enter my father's service. While there, you are to be our guest, along with my mother and sisters."

"How can I leave my father?"

"Do you not see, dearest, it is for his advantage? Altogether for him?"

"But—our—our—marriage. Is it to take place there—or—here? I would like—he must be present. Have you arranged that, Victor? Pardon me if I seem indelicate, but my anxieties about my poor father's situation impel me to action, and banish natural, maidenly hesitation, possibly. Forgive me, dear Victor, my heart is all your own."

There was a long silence. Blanche presumed he was thinking. He *was*.

"You forget, dearest. I have told you of my father's pet scheme—of his bitter opposition to my marriage with any American lady; unless, perhaps, her very high connection—with a President, at least—combined with wealth as vast as or more so than his own, should compensate him for the disappointment.

"His objections to a match such as would be ours in his estimation, I shall have difficulty and delay in overcoming. Of course, I am of age and independent, but I acquainted you with the consequences to me, of thwarting his wishes. It was these thoughts which induced me to propose you should visit us. I will be responsible for your hearty welcome, and I feel confident, darling, that the charms and virtues you possess will soon win their hearts as completely as they have mine. Is it not worth the trial?"

"You spoke of my accompanying you to Europe—did you not—and before Christmas?"

"Well, and why not, after a short stay in New York?"

"When your father shall have withdrawn his opposition, resigned his brilliant hopes of the English countess, or the young sister or daughter of His American Excellency, worth twenty millions, for a daughter-in-law, and

consented to take the penniless daughter of a Virginian gentleman into his family, as the wife of his only son: do you mean *then* we shall go to Europe, Victor?"

"I do not understand you, darling. Explain this curious language. You have mistaken me, probably."

"Who was to accompany me, besides yourself, to London and Paris, should I go, unmarried?"

"You could take Jennie, as maid and companion both. We could spare her, no doubt, or get another in her place. You know her, and would doubtless prefer her therefore. We should be gone but a few months. Perhaps sail through the Suez Canal, and look at Egypt and the East. It would not occupy long."

"And your mother, and your sisters—they are going?"

"Not now—not with us."

"When?"

"They will follow, as soon as ocean travel is agreeable —perhaps, join us in Paris, in the spring."

"When shall we leave Millburn?"

"There is no time to be lost. Besides, I have to look up poor Rosa, and make my deserted old father comfortable during my absence and give the servants instructions in case he should die of age and grief during my 'pleasure trip' abroad."

"Blanche, dearest, you are not jesting?"

"Jesting—Oh, heaven, no—no—no—not jesting!"

"If you will leave all the arrangements to me, you can go with me now—right away. It is best to spare both the old man and yourself the pain of leave-taking. To tell you, darling, the whole truth, Jennie expects us at the old, deserted forge below the dam. We will take her up there. She is fully equipped, and has provided everything, at my expense, you can require, until you get your trunks from home.

"I shall instantly pay off every cent of your father's debts, and my father shall himself acquaint you with that fact, by the time we arrive in the port of Liverpool. Come, come, darling—if you love me—if you ever loved me. My ponies will take us to Woodford, where I can leave the team in care of a friend, and catch the up-train for New York."

"Then it is *all* arranged—*all* arranged, Victor, and I can *write* to my father?"

"You can, dearest,—from Woodford, if you prefer it, and send the letter back by the driver. Let us now return and drive around past the forge."

"Go!"

She arose as she spoke, and as he saw her there, withdrawn a pace or two, as though to have him at complete focus and wither him at a look, he remembered her to the latest moment of his life.

Her figure, divinely tall, stretched to it fullest height, flashing scorn and defiance, while with one arm extended she pointed down a dell where, in the distance, could be seen the horses' heads, as they nibbled the overhanging foliage and thick shrubbery about them.

"Begone, sir—begone, forever! You thought me a poor, weak, heartless, and wicked fool. I have *proved* you a scoundrel, a liar, a traitor, and a villain.

"Were I a man, you should not leave this spot alive. I would crush you sooner than I would an adder in my path. An adder only poisons the body, *you* would poison and destroy the immortal soul. Coward, liar, cheat, impostor, hypocrite, and thief, begone!

"Go, Judas, with all thy vile, ill-gotten treasure; go, and hang thyself, dog!

"The kiss with which thou wouldst betray me shall

be worn off on the altar stone, and washed away with tears of soul-felt penitence.

"Hence, away, vile devil! and never, never more, on earth, even in thy dying mockery of prayer, dare to pronounce and profane the name of the beggared and homeless, but, thank God, untarnished, Blanche Millburn.

"Go down from the mountain, Satan, and possess all the kingdoms of the earth; I will not fall down nor worship thee.

"Begone! Hence! Hence! Begone!"

Ah, she stood, indeed, a Pythoness. Victor, whiter than the foam of rage which rushed to his lips, as he realized all the black fabric of villany, which it had occupied him so long to rear, stone by stone, overthrown in an instant by the feeble hands of a rustic girl of eighteen, nevermore to be rebuilt, for the confusion of languages was complete between them, gazed upon her with admiration that was hatred, that was shame, that was deadly vengeance, that was murder.

Blanche caught that dire gaze fastened on her, and she felt it turning her to adamant.

She understood the icy feeling now, creeping, shivering through her veins, curdling her blood to her very heart.

She understood now, as she heard them anew, the frantic, wailing warning of the invisibles, whose voices filled the forest, as though every leaf and blade of grass was a cloven tongue of flame, and rang a double peal in all the languages of the earth.

"Fly, dear, dear Blanche! Fly—fly—for your life—for your life!"

She heard, but could not heed. She felt that evil eye

freezing the current of her veins, as though that fabled monster were not a myth, but Gorgon, with the semblance and aspect of a fallen angel, gazing upon her and turning her into stone.

Slowly he advanced, and would have seized her, but mortal steps broke the horrible enchantment of the scene.

Crackling twigs at some little distance betrayed the approach of a stranger.

The thick undergrowth made his progress difficult, for he was out of the path, and that decided Victor.

With both hands pressed on the back of his bowed head, like the chief of sinners scourged from Paradise to taste of death and hell, he fled down the hill in the direction of his carriage, concealing his face and form to escape possible recognition, and desperately trusting that Blanche, for her own sake, dared not betray him.

The baffled scoundrel was heard instantly after, driving down the mountain road like a maniac.

A yellow dog now came up, and pending an investigation satisfactory to himself, wagged his stump of a tail, as much as to say, "I know Miss Blanche."

Following, with his gun in hand, and satchel slung on his back, appeared our singular old friend, Redfern. Beetle and Grigg were absent.

"Good heavens, Miss Millburn—here in the woods—alone—and ill! God bless my soul and body, how did that happen?"

Blanche, with a tremendous effort, stepped out from the tree against which she had leaned to avoid falling. Passing her hand across her eyes, she exclaimed:

"Thank heaven, Mr. Redfern, it is you. Give me your arm."

Poor Bob did so, and asked no question, although he was consumed with solicitude to know.

On the way, Blanche, perceiving the phaeton and its owner had gone, stated that they had had a runaway, or nearly so; she had been dreadfully frightened, and as she was afraid to resume her seat in the vehicle, Victor had been obliged by her command to go for some other conveyance.

Thus, sometimes, are the best of us absolutely compelled to *metamorphose* the truth.

Bob did not believe a word of it, for he had seen, but could not distinguish, the figure escaping down the hill, and heard the vehicle drive off furiously towards the village.

That was fortunate for Blanche. For he asked no questions but left her at the foot of the mountain by the road, hurried over to a farm-house, and soon conveyed her in a country carryall and deposited her at her own door in safety, but in agony of spirit, in anguish of mind, in the very valley and shadow of death.

CHAPTER XIV.

PICKING THE FLINT.

THE reader is but imperfectly acquainted with the character of the wily and determined Victor if he supposes that he continued his flight and left Millburn in the pony phaeton forever.

As he drove along, the horrible blasphemies and imprecations he uttered certainly must have provoked

Mephistopheles to an outburst of sardonic laughter; sufficient to cause a ground-swell to agitate the bottomless pit to the surface, convulsing it with sympathetic ripples.

To fill Dark Hollow with unearthly echoes enough to startle the immovable rocks and send a tidal-wave of devilish mirth shuddering through the fantastic growth which environed it.

"Oh, fool, fool, fool!" he ground out between his white teeth, beating his head with his disengaged clenched fist.

"Oh, double damned, puling fool and baby—idiot, ass, not to perceive that the girl had me at disadvantage and drew me on—*me*, to betray the whole network of my plans with the artlessness of a child—of a child.

"Why I must have been mad—blind—blind as a bat—blinded by passion, as many a wise one before me.

"Surely I could not have been drunk. One bottle of champagne and soda could not have intoxicated *me*, surely? No, no, it was not that! It was fate—destiny—hell. But I will triumph yet, in spite of hell.

"Bah, Samson even was shorn by Delilah. And Samson was a giant and Delilah was a—a woman. Ah, I will not again lay my stupid head in the lap of love, and betray my secrets.

"*There* was my error. Love-blind fool, no wonder I betrayed myself—a born idiot might have seen the trap.

"But if I have to tear away the gates of Gaza from her protection, and pluck down the temple by the pillars on my own ruined head, I will have revenge if I perish by it. I swear it—I swear it by all the gods in heaven and hell.

"Whoever interposes now, let him beware. I have

never yet failed, and never will fail while I have brain to plot and soul to dare. If I do—if I *do*—I will tear them out—I will dash them out—and not survive it."

An amiable frame of mind our young gentleman was in, truly.

"What a demure little puss it was to tempt me in her talons thus," he continued. "But, she was beautiful, oh, how beautiful! She shall not escape me. Now, plot, busy brain: we must gather up the meshes and try it once more.

"She will not tell! She cannot tell! Although the drive was sanctioned by her father, and the village believes us betrothed, it would tell awkwardly, and more would be said in a tattling, censorious little place like this than would be agreeable to her or her friends. It would sully her fame. Depend upon it she cannot tell, or I have studied human nature in vain. Now—the next step."

The next step was to have his team put up, and go on foot, all dusty as he was, watching his opportunity on discovering the arrival of Blanche in the care of Redfern, until the latter was out of sight, and send his card up to her.

"Won't you come in, Mr. Victor?"

"No, thank you, Aunt Lucy—is Miss Blanche hurt or ill?"

"I dunno, sir—she look pale like."

"Why, you see we had a sort of accident. The ponies are skittish—fresh—and she was afraid to trust them again. They ran off with me, and I was about to return for her when I saw that she had got back. Tell her so—mind—do not forget."

"No, sir—I will, sir."

Aunt Lucy returned with the card. "Miss Blanche won't see anybody, sir. She tole me to hand you the card an' say she can't be 'sturbed."

"Never mind—keep the pasteboard—put it in the basket. Say I am sorry, very sorry, and will call to-morrow."

"'Deed is dat a nice gentleman," said Aunt Lucy, as she closed the door.

Then he called upon Redfern: he was out. Bob was rarely ever at home. Victor stepped over to "the Spread Eagle," went up to the ladies' parlor, that he might with propriety do so, and sent for the chamber-maid.

Jennie Spry came in with an air half pert and familiar, half respectful.

"Jennie, I met with a slight misfortune to-day, and I want your smartness to help me out."

"La, Mr. Victor, you want *my* smartness; go 'long with you, sir!"

"But I do. Attend to me carefully, and don't forget a word. Miss Millburn accompanied me in the pony phaeton to the zinc mines this morning—"

"She did, sir?"

"Hold your tongue! The horses became unruly while we were on the way back, and she insisted upon getting out. She felt frightened, and somewhat overcome with dust and heat, and I persuaded her to walk a short distance with the help of my arm in the shade of the wood.

"I had fastened the ponies to a tree, and was talking with Blanche, when the sound of breaking twigs and approaching footsteps startled the horses. I ran to them, but had to get in the phaeton for the purpose of con-

trolling them better. I was no sooner seated than the hard-mouthed little devils ran off with me 'spite of all I could do—"

"Oh, Lord!"

"Hush! and never stopped until they reached the stable."

"Lor-sakes, was you killed, sir?"

"No nonsense; be quiet! As soon as I could get them taken care of, I was about to return in great anxiety for Miss Millburn, when I found that Redfern had brought her home in a carryall."

"Mr. Redfern? How did he git there?"

"He must have been the traveller in the wood who scared my ponies."

"That ain't surprisin'—he's ugly enough to scare the old boy."

"Never mind. As much of this story as you can remember and require, you are to tell him and Miss Blanche when you meet them, as what you heard me tell Col. Todd. Don't forget now, and take this to refresh your memory. There is a hole in it; hang it around your neck; it will serve for a memory string." It was a half-eagle.

"Oh, thank'ee, sir—thank'ee!"

"Jennie, my dear! you have helped me before, but I'm in a devil of a scrape now, that's the fact."

"How's that, sir?"

"Why Miss Blanche's mad with me."

"Oh, fie! you haven't been—an' gone—an'—"

"Nothing of the kind. That is—no—certainly not!"

"Well, what's she mad about then? I wouldn't be mad!"

"I know you wouldn't, you rogue—"

"Ha' done now! S'pose ole Todd was lookin'."

"Blanche is mad though, Jennie. She must have misunderstood something I was saying, for she got into a bigger rage than ever I saw anybody in before. So I suppose she wasn't sorry to come home with Redfern instead of me.

"You are to know nothing about this, mind, unless she sends for you; then try to get it out of *her*, and make it up for me with her, with what I have told you, but mind, you are not to hint a word of any talk with me. Run me down in other things if you choose, but patch this quarrel up, on the principle of 'giving the d—l his due.'"

"Well, now, I jest s'pose an' guess an' reckon, Jennie Spry knows her bisness when she sees it before her. You needn't larn me, smart as you air, sir."

"Very well, Jennie. Another thing. I don't want Redfern to suspect it was me in the woods. First find out whether he knows that. If he don't, don't enlighten him; if he does, explain about the runaway."

"All right, as fur as that goes. But the hardest part o' all is to git near enough to that wild bar to talk to him at all. He's more 'feared o' wimmin than I like to see a man. Maybe there's somethin' ain't right about him. He ain't cracked, or bewitched, is he, do you s'pose, sir?"

"No, no, not at all; but let it be your comfort that all men are not alike."

"Now, Mr. Victor, ye're got to stop kissin' o' me, hands off! I've got a beau, a *serious* beau, ha! ha! he! he! he!"

"Who is it, Jennie?"

"You won't tell?"

"Why should I? I never tell anything."

"Well, its Simpleton Simkenses, the 'poticary shop."

"The what?"

"The 'poticary, then."

"So *he's* dying for you now?"

"No, *sirr*; nobody's dyeing for me. I wears my own hair, and I don't change the color, neither—dye, indeed, *dye!*"

"Don't be offended, Jennie. I didn't mean that. I meant dead in love with you."

"Oh, *that* indeed! I believe you, sir. He's most broke all the bottles in the shop, he gits so aggertated whenever I comes past the door."

"What aggravates him? Are you cross to him?"

"There now! Lor, I said aggertated—aggertated—nervous-like."

"Oh, agitated?"

"Yes, *that*. Yisterday he was putting some hair ile and brushes, an' sich, in the winder, so's people could see 'um, to buy 'um, when I come straight across the street a-purpus. He looked up and see me, an', bless his innocent soul, what d'ye think he did? Why, he was a-leaning over, and he got so aggertated, he couldn't git back, but pitched headforemost into his two show-bottles, broke 'em to pieces, and colored hisself a bright sea-green and sky-blue all over, like a Berzillian monkey—O Lordy!"

When Jennie had overcome her recollections of the scene, Victor inquired:

"Any letters?"

"No more."

"Since when?"

"Since yesterday."

"Call regularly—don't fail. You say the clerk is an admirer of yours?"

"*One* of 'em, sir—so's *you!*"

"Hem! so I am, but don't let anybody know it."

"I won't. I'm as much ashamed of it as you air."

"Saucy minx."

"Minx yourself. What does that mean?"

"Never mind. You say you can get any letters through him you ask for?"

"You bet. I should think so—let him dar—"

"Well, now, whisper—Every letter for Jobson, for Blanche, or her father, until I tell you that will do. Get them; let nobody see or suspect you, and bring them straight to me, as you have done all along since the girl was stole away."

"Where is that 'Miss Rose,' as they call her? She ain't no rose; Rosa's her name, and I guess she ain't missed much 'cept by ole Jobson and Miss Blanche. How do you like her?"

"Who?"

"Rosa Moss."

"I don't know. Has she come back?"

"No, and I 'spect she never will. She was always a stuck-up piece, to my mind, and not near so beautiful as somebody I know. That young fellow's crazy 'bout the gal, and is gone all over the world like, searchin' for her."

"What fellow?"

"That Marlin, they call him. He was stayin' with Jobson at the time. He was a shipmate o' ole Jobson's, and they do say the ole man wanted to marry him to Rosa. They tuck to each other mightily, I hear. Miss Clotilda Spinner says so."

"He's not likely to find her, is he?"

"Not 'less he's got more sense than them has as hid her, I guess."

"Well now, Jennie, first the post-office, then Redfern, then Blanche—or, rather, don't go there for the present; you may be sent for. Don't forget you are going to New York to enter my father's service. Don't be surprised at anything they may say, or, by blundering, get yourself or me into more scrapes than you can get out of."

"Catch a weasel asleep."

"Well, then, weasel, kiss me!"

"I won't!"

"Then, there! there! there! there! there!"

"Oh, you wretch! you've broke my comb, and pulled down all my back hair!"

"Put it up with *that*."

"You're a prince—good-bye, dear!"

"Good-bye, Jennie."

"An invaluable girl," muttered Victor, as he walked towards his cottage. "Worth a dozen of Curry. I wish I had a man like her."

CHAPTER XV.

ENTERPRISE.

JOHN WATT, capering about his apartment in Bleecker street, was an interesting exhibition.

What a contrast the undignified fellow presented to the cold, stern, reserved and resolute gentleman who had marched out from the interview with Col. Forestal with the honors of war.

Fortunately he had drawn his boots, and wore a pair

of summer slippers, worked for him by the dimpled fingers of Rosa Moss, in acknowledgment for the memorable service of knocking down Bill Curry.

Otherwise his fantastic pirouettes and ground and lofty tumbling might have disturbed his fellow-boarders, if not the foundations of the house itself.

As he looked facetiously down at his feet during these grotesque antics, he suddenly recognized Rosa's work. Her image presented itself to his imagination, and saddened him instantly.

But he must act upon his plan for the relief of Blanche's father.

"Let's see," said John, sitting down with his studying-cap on—*videlicet*, a cotton night-cap—smoking-cap also—and lighting a cheroot.

"It will take at least ten days to reach there, ten to return, and three or five for them to decide—less will do —it will take a month. The steamer goes to-morrow.

"Then, there's the cable, but there's the expense; and worse than that, the impossibility of submitting the project by that channel.

"Won't do. Must write." And he wrote.

For an hour his quill-pen made lively music over sheet after sheet of foolscap.

Then he enclosed sundry bulky documents, which had principally stuffed his carpet-bag; and, taking a heavy, richly carved ring from a little morocco jewel-box, he impressed the soft wax, with which he had secured the package, with its blood-stone seal.

As he looked at this impression he gave one long deep sigh, put the ring in the case, which he locked in the bag, resumed his seat and relapsed into a revery which lasted full fifteen minutes.

"This will not do!" at last he exclaimed, rising to his feet, "there is work to be done to-day, and to-morrow waits for no man."

Taking the package from the table, after having pulled on his boots and exchanged the cap for his hat, John started for the corner of Wall and William streets.

It was not yet two o'clock, and the Bank of New York would not be closed before his arrival if he hastened.

Dropping his package, pre-paid, in the post-office, on the corner of Liberty street, he continued down to the bank, where he arrived in half an hour from the time he had set out.

He proceeded immediately to the president's room, and was closeted there with that officer some time. The cashier was called in—there was a low conference between the three, which terminated by the president's saying aloud to the cashier,

"Mr. Duncan, I think we may do it. Tell Sherman so. I will answer it to the board."

"Very well, sir," replied the cashier, cheerfully.

"I thank you sincerely, sir. You have done me a favor I shall not forget, depend upon it," said John to the president: then turning to the cashier, "and you also, sir—gentlemen, you have relieved my mind of a great weight."

Both of the bank officers bowed deeply, almost reverentially.

"Poh! poh! don't mention it—a—a—sir. A thing a little out of the common, that's all—nothing to signify. Happy to oblige—a—a—to oblige you.

"You spoke of relieving your mind of a great weight. I was about to remark, if I may be pardoned the observation, ha! ha! you are about to relieve *us* of a great weight,

too, egad! ha! ha!" said the facetious and extra-cordial bank president.

"Mr. Duncan, please see that it is as—a—Mr. Watt desires. Good-day—a—a—sir! Goo-ood-day! Honor us again with a call."

As John went away from the institution, having settled all his business there, both of the officers followed him to the door, and the president opened it in person.

As they bowed him out, their countenances wreathed in smiles, every teller, clerk, messenger, porter, and watchman of the establishment, stood a statue of open-mouthed wonder. Some whispered Corbin, some Fish, some Boutwell, Rothschild, etc., etc., but all agreed it was *somebody*.

It was only John Watt, the poor Cornish miner. But it is astonishing what an effect a fine personal presence has upon man—and womankind—sometimes.

The moment John left, a well-known millionaire entered, asked for a trivial accommodation and positively got snubbed by the cashier. He also asked to see the president, but that officer was reported "engaged."

So he *was*, "washing his hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water," and ejaculating from time to time —"Astonishing! astonishing!"—a course of conduct we cannot explain.

The next day, before noon, John Watt called on Col. Forestal, and to his utter surprise paid every cent of Father Millburn's indebtedness to him, principal and interest, completing the transaction by all the necessary interchange of writings. Forestal had not recovered from his stupefaction when John left him, staring at his check for the total amount on the Bank of New York.

"By the Lord, though," said the gold robber, when

John was out of sight, "I may have been swindled after all. The fellow may have no funds in the bank whatever.

"Hallo, here!"—a clerk appeared.

"Run to the bank with this, take a vehicle—anything—and get it cashed—hundred dollar bills."

The clerk returned in half an hour with the check duly honored, and the entire amount in crisp new Treasury notes.

"Astonishing—as-ton-ish-ing!" said Forestal—the exact expression of the bank president. So all parties were satisfied.

Three days after that Dr. Daws called on Father Millburn, and read him a letter from John, in which he was informed that all the mortgages and other incumbrances on the old man's property were paid off, and deeds of release, etc., obtained.

But John—noble John—never said *how*, and nobody knew the secret except himself and the bank.

That being done John turned his immediate and energetic attention to the case of Rose Moss.

He went to the mayor, and accompanied by that official visited the commissioners and superintendent of police.

The chief detailed four of his most intelligent and efficient detectives, who crossed the Jersey City ferry forthwith. Unobserved, in various clever disguises, they straggled separately into Millburn, and the region of country surrounding, and went to work with the sagacity and dogged obstinacy of sleuth-hounds on the trail.

Three times their number, equally able and experienced, operated in every quarter of New York city and its communications.

John Watt was more at ease now, and felt disposed to rest upon his oars and wait results.

He did not return to Millburn, nor did he propose doing so, until he should hear from London, whither his packet had been despatched.

To while away this leisure, and prevent the incursion of melancholy and bitter thoughts, was now his only occupation.

He had exhausted the novelty of Central Park, the various avenues and squares, and left them without regret with an elevated curve of his fine moustache, which plainly said, "I know you, know you thoroughly—have occasion to remember your heartless hollow mockery to my dying day."

As others sought the magnificent, scrupulously cleaned, expensively paved, marble, granite, and brown-stone lined thoroughfares, and spacious parks, to breathe freely a purer atmosphere, John Watt fled from them, after one supercilious inspection.

Not supercilious because they did not rise in grandeur to the height of his conception or expectations, but because there was something behind all those costly façades.

Something behind the elegant liveried footmen clinging to the splendid equipages emulating royal display.

Something behind the dashing tandems and steeds of world-wide reputation, let them pace or trot never so swiftly.

Other fellows, invisible to the multitude, but visible enough to him behind FELLOWS himself, in his incomparable four-in-hand, which Napoleon the Third sought to but could not purchase.

Something behind the open carriages, filled with

moustached men and beautiful women, which they, perhaps, had not yet seen, but *would* see.

The light of other days behind the light sulky—the skeleton of the closet behind the skeleton-wagon.

There was, behind the West End, and every feature of it, the shadow and the secret of John Watt, the Cornish miner's life, and he fled from it.

Not nervously, not demoralized, not "*sauve qui peut,*" but as became a wise and valiant hero, from the vicinity of a masked battery, whose range and calibre and deadly execution he had once thoroughly tested and withstood.

With that smile of scorn curling his big moustache, John Watt took a final turn down Fifth Avenue, evading the throng of fashionables of both sexes with a grace and dexterity only attainable by the city-bred.

As he glided among and past them his splendid well-dressed figure, fresh complexion, magnificent beard, big honest eyes, and "distingué" appearance and bearing caused many a well-bred stare of interest and admiration of the "foreign gentleman," and many a *sotto voce* exclamation in musical feminine tones of "Who is he?" "Who can he be?" Isn't he splendid?"

No doubt much of this questioning was meant to be overheard; but John was thinking of Blanche Millburn —"the lily of the valley: she *does* toil, and likewise doth she spin, but, in all her glory, thank heaven, she is not arrayed like one of *these,*" mumbled John.

If he committed a sin in thus slightly altering a text of scripture, which he had learned by *heart*, all true lovers, I know, will pronounce his offence venial.

He turned, soon, into Broadway, and on, on, on, down that roaring, tumultuous channel of the living, human tide; past Houston, Prince, Spring, Grand, Howard, past

Leonard and Chambers streets, past the City Hall, past Vesey, Fulton and Dey streets, and filed right into Cortlandt street, and the neighborhood of Washington market.

And still the question behind him was, as it had been wherever and whenever he appeared, "Who is he? I wonder who he is?" John's figure was so striking that, even amidst that multitudinous sea of forms, it demanded and received attention.

Until his arrival in this very Babel and Tophet of sounds and confusion, his thoughts had been of Blanche.

Had her father yet got his letter to Dr. Daws? Was his mind relieved? Would they, now that the "incubus" was removed, impart the tidings to Blanche? If so, what would she think of it? Of him? Would she think of him at all? What if she did? With Victor there. Victor, so wealthy, so handsome, so brilliant, so devoted. Did he love her? How could he help it? He must love her. Everybody must love her. Yet, somehow—somehow a distrust of Victor pervaded John Watt's entire mental and physical being.

He could assign no reason for it in the world. It is true, Forestal, Jr., was smooth, polished, specious, plausible—but no more so than became a college-bred and society-toned man of the world.

Confound the fellow, it couldn't be denied him, even by John Watt, that there was a great deal of manliness about him, and he was—alas, he was—well, as far as could be ascertained, he was—perfection.

"Ah!" sighed John, for the thousandth time, "my case is hopeless—hopeless."

He felt, however, instinctively, that Victor was not to be trusted. That he was a deep one—but past

finding out. Never tripped—or, at least, was never caught.

Why he thought this, *why* he disliked him, he could not say. It was another instance of a Doctor Fell distrust—

> "I do not like thee, Doctor Fell,
> The reason why, I cannot tell—
> But—I do not like thee, Doctor Fell."

That was it—and that was all of it.

Then John thought of poor, lost Rosa. He could not avoid mixing up Victor, in some way, with the subject of her disappearance.

He had nothing in the world to base such a suspicion upon, save that he had made a constant, careful and—let us say it—jealous study of Victor's every look and expression, when even that wily serpent was not cognizant of it.

He had noticed him give her, on several occasions, looks which even her ignorant innocence could not avoid interpreting to the extent that they caused her embarrassment and indignation, and produced the impression in her mind, to which we have alluded, that—"he was not good."

Looks, for which John, on sundry and divers occasions, could have cheerfully knocked him down—or tried to—but Victor was Blanche's betrothed.

Blanche loved him, and how—how could he dare to deface that image, however unworthy, however base, which she—*she* adored?

Then, could he acquit himself *to* himself? Might not his own jealous passion for the beloved object have produced a mental obliquity of vision, which caused him

> —"with optics keen
> To see what was not to be seen?"

And again he refrained.

He was not the acknowledged suitor of either Blanche or Rosa. He was only John Watt, the Cornish miner, and superintendent, subsequently, of the works.

Though, in the latter capacity, he *might* have aspired to the notice and hand of Rose, he was not so inclined, nor had he ever done so.

Therefore—what was it his business?

Nevertheless, John concluded he, Victor, would bear watching, and so he determined she should be watched with sleepless vigilance.

For the preceding reasons, and for another, which was paramount, he did not impart his suspicions of Victor to anybody, not even to the detectives "in confidence." This reason was—his lofty pride, which would not permit, even remotely proceeding from him, a hint to be given which might be suspected by the detectives themselves, or the meanest creature which crawled the earth, to have been in the slightest degree instigated by jealous rivalry.

He feared, and distrusted, and doubted his own motives, and preferred not to run the risk of possibly having to think meanly of himself.

John Watt was, in deed and in truth, the soul of honor.

While he was revolving these thoughts in his mind, he had entered the bustling hurly-burly of the market precincts, and the necessity of preventing his garments being rent piece-meal from his person, as he squeezed through the throng, obliged him to discontinue his idle revery—continuance in it might be productive of mishap similar to that which befell the glass merchant, the barber's fifth brother, in the "Arabian Nights."

At this moment he heard a puerile voice, which sounded somewhat familiar, screaming out with delight:

"O lordy, there's Mr. Watt! My eye! Mr. Watt, Mr. Watt! Oh, Mr. Watt! Hold on, sir! Hold on!"

He turned, for the cry proceeded seemingly from under a huckster's stall some four or five benches off in the rear.

There was a perfect jam of people about the spot, who, each with a currency note of small denomination in his or her hand, appeared to be struggling desperately to invest said amount in advance of their neighbor, in some enterprise or other, the nature of which could not be seen at that distance.

The voice arose again, shrill and piercing as the tone of a fife or piccolo: "Wait a minute, Mr. Watt! Please do—don't go! I'll be there in one minute."

Then it apparently addressed the crowd: "Now, what's the use o' your shovin'—jest you stand back, or I'll let him out as sure as shootin', an' then you'll see him an' feel him, too, I guess! Now, don't I tell you the show's out? The show's shet up for to-day. Here's a gentleman waiting, I want to see, so jest clare out, half a thousand of you! I'll be back here, or in Fulton Market to-morrer, so you can fetch along your dimes then."

With these words there was a vigorous snap-to, as of the lid of a clumsy wooden box, the dispersing crowd was elbowed aside, and who do you think stood before the astonished John, said box tightly hugged under one arm, as though the owner was afraid of its being stolen from him? Guess!

BEETLE.

Yes, Beetle. A New York "*gamin*" or "street Arab." Risen in the short space of three weeks to stand the acknowledged head of his profession.

Admired, wondered at, fawned upon, wholesomely feared, but, best of all, thoroughly appreciated, and most heartily and unselfishly loved.

The young rascal had found out his true vocation.

"Why, Beetle! In the name of all that's wonderful—common sense included—how did you get here? Did you crawl up out of the ground, like your namesake? I left you in Millburn. How did you get away? Does your uncle know? Come along with me to my house, and tell me all about it."

John, in his astonishment, asked all these questions in a breath.

Having taken a good grip of the boy's jacket to avoid losing him in the crowd, John worked his way vigorously to its outskirts, lugging Beetle after him. On his way to Bleecker street, he questioned him as follows:

"How did you get here?"

"I runned away, sir!"

"Ran away—what for?"

"'Cause Robison Crusoe did, and 'Turn-agin Whittington-lord-mayor-o'-London' did, and all them fellers who went to seek their fortune—that's 'cause why."

"Does your uncle know what's become of you?"

"I got one o' our editors to write to him for me the other day, an' say I'm safe, with the other boys and him, an' makin' lots o' tin."

"One of your what?"

"One o' our editors. I'm a news-boy, too."

"Oh! How long have you been here?"

"Three weeks—want to see my show?"

"What show?"

"In my box here—won't bite—pulled his teeth out—can't bite. Four feet long and lots o' rattles. I call him 'Watchman' cause he's got a rattle."

"What do you mean? What is it?"

"A rattlesnake."

"The devil! What are you doing with it? Where did you get it?"

"Got it at Millburn. *Cot* it at Pimple Hill. Thowed a hankercher over it. Pulled out its teeth afterwards with the silk-hankercher. Grigg held his head down with a forked stick, and I pulled his teeth out—I don't mean Grigg's teeth. When I got him, that made me think o' going to New York with him. Everybody likes to look at a rattlesnake if it can't bite. So I fixed up this box to show him in, and I made up a bundle o' clo'es, and stole out the loft window when uncle was 'sleep, jest the very night after you left. It was bright moonlight, and ole Rennard tried to foller me, but I had to stone him back. I wonder how he is, and Grigg and uncle and *all* of 'em. I guess I'll hear soon.

"Say—do you know I come here in the cars after I got to Woodford showing 'Watchman' for ten cents a head, ten cents a peep, that means. The conductor let me. It took me a awful time to get to Woodford, though. I got tired, and hungry, and wet, an' everything—but I warn't skeered.

"There ain't no back-out in me, you bet. When I got here the rest o' the boys didn't want to let me show, an' the big ones tried to skeer me out'er it. But I guess I soon spiled a few o' their mugs for 'em. They wouldn't a knowed theirselves in the lookin'-glass the way I bunged their eyes and smashed their noses all over their faces. They let's me alone now. I'm head o' the little boys' crowd—you ask 'em if I ain't."

"I don't doubt it, young America."

"Well, now, I bet you can't tell how much I've made off my snake 'Watchman.'"

"No—how much?"

"Fifty dollars. An' it's all in bank, besides what I made with papers. All in three weeks. What do you think o' that?"

"What do I think? I don't know *what* to think. I'm an Englishman, and slow. You're a Yankee, and fast. Now listen to me. You'll be President of the United States one day, if you live, and don't go into the Connecticut clock business."

"You think so? Well I'll keep out o' that. Do you live here? Golly! You go fust."

And they ascended the stairs and entered John's apartment.

As soon as they were seated, Beetle, as requested, leaving his "show" outside the door, John inquired:

"Where do you live?"

"Oh, most anywheres. I've lived a heap o' places since I been in New York. I live now in the fourth story back, number 34, Chatham street. It's a high old place, I tell you—sky high. I'm going to move. I'm gettin' up in the world, so I'm going to come down to the second floor o' 36, 'cross the alley—I see they ain't found Miss Rose Moss yet?"

"No! You were there the day they found out she was stolen, were you not?"

"Yes, sir. Oh, there was a orful time. That night everybody was out in the mountains with torches lookin' for her. That made uncle so tired, an' sleep so sound, so 's I could steal away. Poor uncle, I know he'll miss me. But I'm going to see him soon—do you know I think I see one o' our Millburn people down in Chatham street?"

"No—who? who is it?" queried John with immediate interest.

"Bill Curry—Todd's hostler."

"Ah! when?"

"I see him again, last night. I ain't *quite* certain it's him. Yes I am, too—I know him by a scar he got where his hand was broke saving Mr. Forestal's life. Bill Curry's boarding there near our house. Leastways it seems so to me. I see him a hangin' round there a good deal. But he kind o' dodges me, and purtends he don't know me."

John Watt hugged Beetle so at this information that he nearly squeezed the breath out of him.

Then John detailed to him, in strict confidence, all his own suspicions, now revived with redoubled force, and ended by making Beetle promise to sub-let the snake business, and give all his time and attention, day and night, to the close observation of Bill Curry and his every movement, for, depend upon it, in that direction lay the clue to the discovery of the fate of Rose Moss.

"For Bill Curry, you remember, was Victor's groom, and has disappeared ever since Miss Rose did."

Beetle entered with all his soul into the plan, from pure goodness of heart and love of adventure. At late bedtime they parted at the street door, John saying pleasantly, not that it was necessary to suggest any mercenary motive to the generous boy, "Be sharp—be cunning, Beetle, and you can add to your fifty in the bank the 'five hundred dollars reward' for the recovery of poor Miss Rose."

To this the lad replied, in an earnest whisper, "Mr. Watt, jest please don't you say a word to them detectives 'bout me. I don't want none o' their help. They's

on'y a lot o' muffs, an' the boys say they goes snacks with all the pickpockets, thieves, and roughs in the city. I wants to work this thing on my own hook, 'long with some other boys I know."

"All right, Beetle!" responded John, laughingly—"good-night!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SOROSIS.

WHILE everybody else was so busy, it is not reasonable to suppose that Clotilda Spinner was altogether idle.

On the contrary, Clotilda, in her earlier years, having been noted for her indefatigable energy, could hardly be expected to have abandoned her distinguishing characteristics already, in the very heyday of their development.

She was, as it were, completely seasoned, mind and body, for the enterprise, which absorbed her to that extent that she was a thoroughly dried-up old maid.

That enterprise she regarded as her mission, so solemnly had she embraced it. And that mission was to marry Bob Redfern, and humanize him. "Humanize him, Mrs. Wedlock, afore the pore creetur loses his senses in the persoot of snaiks and sich. Why don't he persoo me, madam, while he is about it, in preference—*that's* what I want to know?"

Clotilda did not intend to compare herself by any process of analogy to "sarpints," in regard to which she was a true daughter of Eve, and more than disposed to

obey the scriptural prophecy, and "bruise their heads," whenever they crossed her path, had she dared.

"But, marm," said she to her favorite gossip, "talking of snaiks, they is my favorite aversion, as the saying is, ever sence I picked up one once when I was a innocent little child, and was going to tie it on my leg, marm, thinking it was a beautiful garter, which my own brother hisself told me it was, he knowing all the time, and holding his sides to keep from bustin' out a larfin.

"Mrs. Wedlock, marm, the fact, truth, indeed, is that things is slow here. There ain't no marrying, nor giving in marriage, which is a thing as is contrairy to Scripter, and a disgrace to any Christian parish as pertends to support a pastor.

"What is a pastor good for, marm, if it ain't to marry folks, and christen 'em, and bury 'em an' sich, and git well paid for it?—that's what's the matter.

"I asks *you*, marm, ain't that so? What good is your dear, sweet, good, pious husband to you, marm, ef he don't keep the pot a bilin, which he don't muchly—small blame to him.

"Now I'm willing to make a sackerfice o' myself for the good o' the church, an' take this pore, misfortunit outcast for better for wuss, to set a good example to the rest."

"That's right, Clotilda, it does you credit," said the pastor's wife; "and the Lord 'ill reward you. Why there's half a dozen couples at least, in this village now, who ought to have been married long ago. Especially that rich Mr. Forestal and Blanche Millburn. They can both afford it."

"Yes, marm," adds Clotilda, "and Mr. Watt, ther superintendent, ought'er been married long ago. There's

lots o' fine gals would a jumped at him—I blush for my sects, but sich is the facts—they would.

"The wimmin o' this nineteenth sentry haven't got no modesty nor delicacy to speak about whatsomever. Thinking o' nothing but match-making, as ef all matches was made in Heaven or Chicago."

"My dear!" expostulated Mrs. Wedlock.

"Well, marm, no offence, leastways none was intended. You know what I mean, marm; an' its easier to talk right than mean right.

"Now look at that rich stranger. He's handsomer than Apollyon; but handsome is as handsome does, says I.

"I don't believe he's after no good with his soft sawder. I tell you what, Mrs. Wedlock, I feel the blood a curdling in my buzzum when he comes near me, an' somethin' or other, I don't know what, a creepin' an' crawlin' up an' down my back-bone like—like—well I might say, hiderfoby. I railly feel as ef I am in danger, an' feel grateful for company and pertected like, even ef it's only the cat.

"'Deed ef I am ever begged an' over persuaded to change my condition, you may depend on it, my dear, it won't be to take the name of Clotilda Forestal. Now you've heard me say it."

"Then, dear," said her companion, "to return to what we were saying. I *did* think we could bring about a match between Mr. Watt and poor Rose Moss, but that's off now, and so is she, poor girl."

"Oh, the young man they calls Marlin, which old Jobson brought home with him, *he* was the one for her. I fished *that* all out o' old Jobson in no time."

"What's become of him—Marlin?"

"He's rummagin' high an' low for her, swearin' all manner o' vengeance 'gainst them as beducted her. He ain't ben back here sence."

"How's the old man to-day? Have you called?"

"Oh, yes, marm, of course. Well, the ole man's very porely, and takes on awful 'bout the loss o' his darter, as he calls her. He ain't out'er bed yit, an' it's my opinion he never will be, 'cept she's found—which she won't be—or ef she is, she'd better not be. It'll be too late."

"Let us hope not!"

"Certingly, ef you wish it, marm—that is—of course, let us hope so. I do railly—but I know these men better to my cost—I mean I don't believe in none o' 'em, 'cept them as has God's grace like your precious lamb, marm. But *they* isn't like men, is they, marm? They's sorter *changed* by grace."

"I hear there's a coldness, not to say an open rupture between Blanche and young Mr. Forestal. If that is so, it will spoil that match, will it not? Do you know anything of it, Clotilda?"

"Well, dear, seein' it's you, an' there's nobody listening, an' you're to jine me in the sorosis we're getting up, an' help me all you can to save that wretched 'Bachelor Bob,' as they calls him, I'll make a clean breast o' all I know. But lor' sakes don't let it go no further, for it 'ud wuss an' spile all."

"Clotilda, my love, you know *me!*"

"I *do*, darling, ef I ever knowed a human critter. Well, you must know that it 'curred to me that the o'ny way to git that heathen to take any notice o' me at all, or 'low me to come near enough to him to operate on him at all—which I verily believes I *do*,

like pison—was to purtend to take a interest in suthin' he was interested in hisself, and kinder draw him on that a way.

"I soon found, by talking to this one and that a one, an' watching an' listening an' prying around—well *you* know, dear—that he keered more for Father Millburn than he did for anything, 'cept, maybe, that little abortion they calls Beetle. You know him, dear, the nasty little wretch, and what he did to me.

"Well, then, you see I knowed he'd be bound to have his eye open on that courtin' o' Miss Blanche. So I had him there, I thought.

"From the day I took up that determination to git into his confidence, spite o' all I suffered at his hands indirect (ain't that Christian charity, dear, to forgive so?) I follered him about everywhere, an' there warn't an hour o' the four an' twenty, day an' night sence—an' there ain't now—but I could tell where that blessed man was, an' what he was a doin' of, less he was in bed, then you see, dear, modesty. I was always modest—always. 'Modesty *and* virtue thy name is Clotilda Spinner.'"

Here the tea appeared so strong as to get into her head. They were seated at that meal in the little back room in the parsonage.

Mrs. Wedlock sought to recall her—

"Yes, dear; well, you watched and followed him, and you saw—"

"I saw Blanche Millburn leanin' up agin' a tree, an' faintin' like—not quite gone, but jest a going, an' jest a not—an' tearin' down the mountain, like mad, I see Victor Forestal crushin' his hat down on his head, an' beatin' it with both fists, an' tuggin' an' pullin' at his

beautiful curly hair, like it was snaiks he was a tryin' to strangle. I never see the like afore in all my born days.

"I jes' stopped a minit to see that Blanche took Mr. Redfern's arm, that she was pale as death, that some awful words had passed between 'em, for I heard her voice minits afore I seed her, but misfortinately couldn't make out but one word she said, for the echoes—that word was, 'Begone!'—I heard her say *that* once't or twice't.

"I had to hide myself, an' git away from the mountain afore they did, or they'd maybe see me.

"I tell you, dear, I had a dreadful time a-follerin' that man up the mountain. He's so keen sighted you know, an' I do believe that day he picked out the orfullest places he knowed, jest as ef he had see me, an' was tryin' to dash my brains out agin the trees an' rocks to keep up with him.

"My gownd was dark, though, an' I kept at a 'spectful distance, so I don't think he see me after all.

"Sence then, Blanche Millburn won't have nothing 'tall to do or say with Forestal. She sent his card back, Aunt Lucy told me, and she's ben that distracted ever sence, she won't eat nothing, nor sleep none, nor let nobody come near her, not even her father, poor ole man, 'cept Dr. Daws.

"My 'pinion is that match is spiled for good an' all. I'd give my head to a-heard what the quarrel was about, but I can't find out, high or low. Dr. Daws don't tell nobody nothing. What a pity that is, dear; a doctor knows so much, an' *could* be *so* entertainin'."

"It is, indeed!" acquiesced the worthy Mrs. Wedlock.

"Now, dear, what do you spose I'm going to do next?"

"What?"

"I'm goin' to write a note to Mr. Redfern, an' tell him that it was Mr. Forestal, an' all I know about it, but not *how* I know; an' I'll write it sich a way as will heap living coals o' fire on his head for his conduct to Clotilda Spinner."

"Excellent, excellent, darling; that will serve him right, and it's Christian, too."

"Oh, I know it—let me alone for that."

"Where's Victor now? He hasn't gone away, I hear."

"Not him. The devil's in that man, ef he ever was *out*'er any man that ever was, 'cepting *your* good, mild, Christian husban', as you trained yourself, dear—an' it does you credit. I mean to do the same with my man when I git him, ef it tain't too late; an' I don't think it is, for I never see any man could stand Clotilda Spinner long."

"How does he pass his time now, do you know, Clotilda?"

"Do I know—what *don't* I know, Mrs. Wedlock, marm, 'bout the people in this village—that is worth knowing?"

"Nothing, I'm sure."

"You never spoke a truer word in your life, dear. That is so, railly. Why, Forestal keeps mighty close sence then. He's tried a many times to git to see Blanche, an' he's writ her letters, but he always gits 'em back again unopened, and gits sich cold coffee at their door, that he don't try no more now. Whenever he's out, it's in the mountains, hunting and fishing; an' ef he ever meets Mr. Redfern, why, *my* man skoots off some other way, or won't even nod to him when they passes mighty swiftly.

"He used to take off his hat to Mr. Victor once't, but he don't do so now. Jennie Spry tried to get talk of Mr. Redfern once't, to 'splain it, as she says she heerd all about it as Mr. Forestal was telling it at the 'Spread Eagle.' But 'twarn't no go. Jennie's a good deal talked about, my dear; but I says nothing—lor' sakes, I never says nothin' to nobody."

"I know."

"Victor goes riding and drivin' a good deal. Sometimes he goes a many mile an' stays away days. Once't or twice't he was gone a week at a time, and some folks say he was up to York and back agin, but who knows?"

"Who knows, indeed? Maybe so. Has Mr. Redfern heard of that boy Beetle yet?"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. He got a letter from a man in New York sayin' the boy was with him an' all safe. He's a newsboy, an' has made a show o' one o' his pesky snaiks he cot here on Pimple Hill, chargin' ten cents for a sight of it, an' the fools there has took after it so the nasty little creetur's made fifty dollars they say, if he ain't stole it, which is most likely—I can't abear him.

"Bob Redfern is delighted at what he calls ther smartness an' independence o' that boy. But I calls it vagabondism, an' I say he'll come to the gallows, though he did send home a right smart lot, an' they said he was goin' to send more. I think ther folks in New York can't have much sense no way ef they do brag so much. Think o' payin' to see a nasty snaik! Why they can go over there to Pimple Hill an' see five hundred of 'em any day.

"Still," added Clotilda, reflectively, "that panier and 'Grecian bend,' and 'Roman wriggle,' an' waterfall, an' everything, come from there, and they *is* beautiful!"

"Do you think Jennie Spry will get married?"

"Hem! she *could*."

"Tell me, Clotilda, dear?"

"You won't tell?"

"Of course not, love."

"She's after Mr. Forestal, ha! ha! ha! the impudence an' conceit o' that gal—*she!*"

"She's injured herself by her intimacy there, hasn't she, dear?"

"Why *you* know, Mrs. Wedlock, people *will* talk, but somehow they seem to think Jennie Spry is jest a sharp, pert, good-natured, good-hearted sort o' gal without a particle o' harm in her. She's too free with the other sect. I don't like that myself, but Lord bless your soul, I kin forgive her a sight o' wildness, for she jest pokes fun at the men an' tantalizes them to that extent that they're all dead in love with her, an' she won't have none o' them.

"Now there's two o' her admirers she might have any day ef she'd on'y say the word."

"Who are they?"

"The poor feller they turned out'er ther post office an' had arrested for giving her other people's letters. She didn't know it warn't right, but *he* did, it 'pears. Them New York 'tectives did that, reporting him to what they call head-quarters, whatever they is. An' the other is Mr. Simples—"

"Mr. Simples? I thought so."

"Oh, yes, indeed. He's crazy about her. We're feared to send there for medicine now, most. Being very light-haired and delicate, not to say weak-minded, it's kind o' gone to his brain, I reckon."

"Now, Clotilda, dearest, as you've been so very kind

—take another cup o' tea, dear, this is stronger than the last, and you haven't far to go—I've got a great piece of news for you."

"For me—laws sakes, Mariah, tell me right away, don't keep me in 'spense—what is it?—what is it?"

"They've got a warrant out for Bill Curry, Jennie's old beau she gave the mitten to, who used to be hostler at the Spread Eagle."

"Why, he's Forestal's groom—"

"He used to be. Mr. Forestal told them he had turned him off for drunkenness some time ago."

"Why, how did that come about—the warrant, dear?"

"Some say information in a letter from New York led to it. Some that Knob Wallis, the constable, has suspected him for some time of being concerned in the abduction, and other crimes, and swore out a warrant for him to-day. Anyways, he did it."

"Why he ain't been seen about here for weeks."

"That's just it, dear. They haven't found him, but the police are hunting him high and low."

"You don't say so? Give me another cup o' tea —fill it up, dear, an' I'll go an' git all ther particulars before I lay my head in the lap o' Morphy this night."

In ten minutes more, the first informal meeting, prior to its organization, of the board of managers of the "Millburn Sorosis" was dissolved, along with the last lump of sugar in the last cup of tea. It was a spirited affair.

CHAPTER XVII.

WILD ZOÈ OF THE GLEN.

"Enough, that we are parted—that there rolls
A flood of headlong fate between our souls,
Whose darkness severs me as wide from thee
As hell from heaven, to all eternity!"

THOUGHT Blanche Millburn, with tortured, burning brain and writhing heart, as she sat, in the desolate solitude of her chamber, contemplating the rottenness and corruption within of that glittering altar at which she had so long and devoutly worshipped.

His own hand had rent the veil of the inner temple; and where, she had deemed in that Holy of Holies was conducted nothing but the worship of the Most High, through soul-felt adoration of all things beautiful and pure, with incredulous horror she beheld that the light which would have led astray was but the phosphorescent gleam from putrid banquets, that it burned at unhallowed rites, lit vile orgies of bestial crime, and played with lambent flame over that face which, in her innocence, she had mistaken for the glowing countenance of a god.

Why did not the mountains fall down upon and hide him forever?

Why did not the horrid gulfs, fissures and caverns of the earth swallow him up, and choke, with their less pestilential vapors, his sacrilegious breath?

Leaving, pale and haggard from the conflict of emotions, one victim to the machinations of this villain, occupied with thoughts, like legions of demons tempting and goading her to desperation, with only that relief—which may Heaven in its mercy inspire—prayer; we have now to pursue the course of another. Her less

strong, less spiritual, but not less beautiful and innocent, and far, far more wretched and helpless little friend, Rose Moss.

When we left her, with a speed to which fear seemed to lend wings, she had darted up the barrier of hills which walled in the inky waters of Dark Hollow.

Providentially directed, as in such cases it often appears, notwithstanding the impenetrable blackness of the surrounding scene, she maintained a precarious footing in the angles of the rocks, and mechanically grasping the branches of trees and shrubbery which offered assistance in her ascent, as though stretching out friendly hands to the poor, beleaguered girl, and conducting her to secure shelter under their protection.

With quick instinct, fully aroused, she estimated the importance of noiseless flight and immediate further concealment than the darkness afforded.

While she hesitated she saw rocks, trees and shrubbery around her illuminated with an instant glare like that of lightning. She put up her hands to shield her eyes from the too sudden accession of light; at the same time the voice of Curry was heard calling to his master, still further down the slope:

"Here she is! Here she is, sir! She can't escape, she's got to the ravine!"

"Keep her in sight—hold your lantern steady—don't lose her!" sung out Victor to the brute acting in the capacity of his bloodhound.

The desperation of the moment forced an alternative upon her not suggested by reason—one certain to betray her, and how could it possibly result in any advantage? But Rose could not reflect now: it was a time for action.

Quick as thought she drew one of the little Derringers

from the pockct of her dress, where she had hastily thrust them at the outset of her flight, and fired directly at the source of the light, without a moment's hesitation.

The big, round ball went bizzing and tearing through the night on its errand of death. "Zip!" it struck, shattered and extinguished the lantern in the upraised, extended hand and arm of the exultant Curry, ran along the whole surface of the limb, as though it was the cannon-ball exercise of a juggler, tearing and ripping up the sleeve, and plowing a channel for itself in the shrinking flesh, leaving it all quivering and bloody.

Caroming upon the shoulder-blade, it sped off and struck Victor upon the left temple, full fifty feet away, and fifteen at least out of the direct line of propulsion.

It was a chance shot, but no more marvellous in its effects than thousands of others perfectly well authenticated.

Both the men staggered an instant and fell in their tracks.

As the smoke curled away in the darkness from the warm mouth of the weapon, which dropped from the hand of Rose, she felt herself sinking, as the anguished cry of Curry struck upon her bewildered senses, and endeavored to recover her balance.

In vain. The appalling truth flashed on her mind, as she threw her hands high above her head, clutching desperately for support, but clasping nothing—nothing but the thick, chill night, which enwrapped her like a pall.

She fell backward with a shriek, whose sound once heard could never be forgotten, sheer over and down the precipice into the ravine, on the brink of which she had unconsciously stood.

Silence and darkness for a moment reigned over their usurped dominions.

Victor was the first to recover. The spent ball had only stunned him, passing under a curly lock which hung upon the temple, slightly grazing the skin, and cutting off the upper tip of the ear.

The profuse hemorrhage which it caused doubtless assisted in speedily restoring his senses.

The first use he made of them was to call to his companion, who answered first by a groan, then by growls and curses. "The she-devil has broke my arm that's all—make haste if you don't want me to bleed to death!"

"Where is she?"

"Gone to h—ll I hope—escaped!"

"Curse her!"

"With all my heart; the devil d—n her."

The devil had just done so, it appeared—both of them.

"Grasp your arm above the wound with your other hand, squeeze it with all your might, and stop the flow of blood—I'll be with you as soon as I get a light. Are you down—can you walk?" said Victor.

"Down? yes. Walk? no, not yet. I'm getting better though. Hurry and stop this d—d bleeding. The bone isn't broke I find, but my left arm's ripped open to the shoulder, and my shoulder's so numb the ball must a stopped there!"

"No it didn't—it struck me and cut the ear a little. I was knocked over too. Are you sure she's escaped? Can she get away?"

"D—n *her*—don't stand there all night talkin', cap'n —I'm bleeding to death!"

"Hold on a minute—keep up your spirits—I'll be back in a minute."

And back, in a few minutes, from the cave, he came, with a candle protected by a paper lantern hastily rolled about it to prevent its being blown out, and a lot of linen obtained by tearing a sheet into strips.

He found Curry sitting on his haunches looking as surly as a half-trained bear, and completely saturated with blood, which, coagulating, now had ceased to flow. He held the arm, grasped near the shoulder, as instructed.

Victor, master of this as of all sciences, examined the wound—muttered "psha, a mere scratch—soon be good as new"—and twisted a tourniquet above the orifice of the main arteries, and proceeded, with all the necessary materials, to stitch and tie, apply strips of healing-plaster and bandage *secundem artem*.

"Now," said he, "lean on me and get back to the cave—it would never do to be caught in this trim by any cursed fool on the search for that girl."

Slowly and carefully making their way down the rocks, they presently reached their retreat, and the coarse ungainly form of Curry was consigned to a shake-down near the snowy couch the beauteous Rose had so recently occupied.

Giving him a good dram of brandy in which was some infusion or other doubtless good for him, as it would have been had it killed him, Victor, having consulted his watch and finding it within an hour of daylight, sat down beside him, and a strong toddy, to wait for its coming to prosecute the search for Rose.

He was determined to obtain some clue to her, if it were only the direction in which she escaped.

Self-preservation, his own safety, now demanded unremitted efforts to that end. Should she meet with her friends, now so numerous in pursuit of her, his doom was certain and speedy.

As he sat there sipping his brandy, and puffing his Spanish regalia, the stalwart bloody ruffian extended on the floor of the cave near him, his revolver restored to the stand at his elbow—he had found it in searching for materials for Curry's wound—the candelabra filled with burning wax-lights, shedding a soft, mild radiance over the interior of the subterranean chamber, he made a very comfortable-looking bandit, indeed. It would have been a subject worthy of the genius of Salvator Rosa himself. Had our Rose been present there, as formerly, it would no doubt have heightened the picturesque effect.

Fortunately, or unfortunately—for we are in the dark as to her fate—she was not there.

Victor sat smoking and drinking, always with busy plotting brain, which the stertorous breathing of Curry did not disturb in the least, until his watch admonished him that day was sufficiently advanced to enable him to distinguish objects, and pursue the trail of Rose Moss.

Blowing out the lights, slipping the revolver back in his belt, and leaving Bill Curry still snoring away, giving undeniable proof of a great deal of life left in him indeed, he quitted the cave, and retraced their steps of the previous night.

They were readily found. His first object was to restore things as far as possible to a state of nature.

This his ingenuity, and the waters of an adjacent brook, soon enabled him to do.

"Confound the fellow!" he grumbled, while engaged

in this distasteful task; "how stupid of him to get hit, how unlucky for me! What the d—l will I do with him on my hands, along with the girl, if I find her! Bah! how 'the aspiring blood of Lancaster' clots and coagulates! The fellow bleeds like a stuck-pig. This decides me: I shall never have *his* blood on my hands again, 'tis too filthy.

"That's finished. Now to the brook, to see if it *will* 'the multitudinous seas incarnadine,' as Shakespeare says. Shakespeare was a clever fellow; but he had some rather unpleasant fancies. I wish he hadn't—they haunt me."

He soon cleansed his person from the obnoxious stain of Curry's plebeian blood, and starting from the spot where that worthy had been wounded, which he could hardly find again, so skilfully had he removed every trace of its having been disturbed, with difficulty he clambered up in the direction from which he judged the shot had come.

He was astonished that a young girl's feeble limbs could have overcome the obstacles of such an ascent.

"There is no spur like danger," he remarked. "She is agile as an antelope, and it's my opinion she's leaped the ravine. If so, she has miscalculated this time. It is five hundred feet across, and a brawling torrent at the base. Even the green sward on the margin wouldn't save her, falling from such a height."

He found two long sliding-tracks, where the bright grass had been scraped away by her feet as she slipped over the treacherous brink.

Her course through the dense pine brush was clearly defined by branches beaten back, and draggled as though clutched by desperate hands, and stripped of their resin-

ous leaves as they slipped through the grasp unable to retain them.

Her frail body—for in contact with this rude, wild nature at the best, it was frail—seemed to have been struck, and bandied from bough to lower bough in shuttlecock style.

It seemed as though the barbarous vegetation had caught the infection of cruelty from man, and the lower animal organization, and tossed its prey in merciless sport from one branch to another, to be at last despatched when insufficient life remained to torture as it shrank, cowered and suffered.

Did this thought strike Victor? Never; it was not the tone of his mind. Cold-blooded selfishness had long ago drowned out the last spark of human pity in his bosom.

As he leaped down from rock to rock, and swung and dropped from tree and bush and vine, with keen excited glance at every indication of the trail, his dilated eye took in none of the wild sublimity and beauty of the scene.

His expanded nostril inhaled none of the aromatic fragrance from the dank shrubbery, or wilderness of flowers beneath his tread.

Carnivorous as a jackal or a ghoul, he pursued his excited path till he stood panting, his clothing all awry and gummy from contact with the pines and cedars, on a heavy, soft bed of withered and decomposed fallen leaves and rubbish, the accumulated *débris* of many autumns.

He had never and possibly no other than Rose had ever been in this precise locality before.

The pass by which this ravine was crossed lay at least a mile below, and there had never been occasion to thread its difficult labyrinths to this point.

By this time all search for Rosa in the vicinity of her former home, as far as he knew, had been abandoned, and he had no idea of encountering any living creature there.

His search now was for the dead body of his wretched victim. The image of Rosa again appeared to his mental vision.

Rosa, budding, blooming, blossoming in beauty, redolent of all captivating attractions—her very breath bewildering and intoxicating beyond the perfumes of "Araby the blest."

Rosa, drowned in tears, like her namesake drenched in dew.

"By heaven!" exclaimed the sensual wretch, "she is a thousand-fold more beautiful in agony of grief—in despair itself—than any she on earth—except, except Blanche.

"*There* is mind and matter both. She I *could* marry, if compelled otherwise to lose her—with a trip to Chicago. But *this* one, as Richard says, 'I'll have her, but I will not keep her long!'

"Hallo! who's that?"

Well he might have started, and interrupted himself with the query.

A lovely creature sat on the opposite side of the tumbling brook, over a hundred yards distant, leisurely employed in bathing in the stream two such beautiful, classically perfect, and gleaming white feet and limbs, which she had bared to the knee for the purpose, that the voluptuary paused in admiration, and pure ideas of art glanced for an instant through his corrupt mind, when hosts of wicked thoughts jealously sprang up, strangled and expelled the intruders.

Butterfly that he was—though of an unknown venomous description—he forgot the object for which he was there, and drew nearer and nearer as woods and rocks permitted, with unhallowed gaze gloating upon the dazzling attractions the fair beauty displayed.

She did not perceive him, as her head was bent low over the dimpled eddy of the stream which she had selected for ablution.

He had advanced within ten paces, bewildered, staring, hesitating, and advancing, like one under the influence of some powerful spell; when, suddenly, the voice of Curry, whom he could see now as he turned, on the summit above him, hailed him to inquire, "What luck?" At the sound, this modern Susannah raised her head, recognized him, *shuddered violently, closed her eyes, and sunk back on the rock in a profound torpor of a peculiar character*—more like the effects of chloroform, or a mesmeric sleep, than any case of ordinary swooning.

Victor called loudly to Curry to come there; as he prevented her extended form from sliding down the shelving rock into the stream. Curry joined him, and master and man took counsel together.

It was indeed Rosa, alive, and apparently unharmed.

The branches had tossed her lightly, tenderly, and pityingly into one another's arms to the bottom of the precipice, as, in the "Arabian Nights," the kind genii broke the fall of the good dervish, and safely bore him to the bottom of the well, into which he was cast by his envious brethren.

But the fright, the shock, the friendlessness of her situation, and, lastly, this sight of her persecutors—have they all been without effect upon the delicate Moss Rose?

Again she shuddered, precisely as before, drew a long,

gasping breath, opened her blue eyes wide and staring, and rolled them around, as though looking for the first time on an unknown world, leaped to her feet and ran, like Atalanta, a dozen rods down the soft green sward in her snowy bare feet.

She was presently intercepted; for the suddenness of the movement had taken them both by surprise.

As Victor laid his hand upon her shoulder, she turned her head, looked him in the eyes, and burst into the tiniest, merriest peal of laughter, like plashing drops in the alabaster vase of a fountain, like the prelude of a summer shower on the shingle-roof of a farmer's cottage in sultry July.

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"

It rang out like a chime of fairy wedding-bells; was taken up by the babbling brook and the rollicking breeze; among the glistening mistletoe and laurel which clapped their prickly hands in glee; and by the twittering birds and buzzing bees was told all over the ravine and treasured by every echo in the interests of poets and fairies.

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! I know you—you're Champagne Charley!" and she sang, while Victor and Curry stood pictures of charmed amazement,

> "'Champagne Charley is his name,
> Champagne Charley is his name;
> Always kicking up a frightful noise,
> Kicking up a noise at night,
> And always ready for a spree.'"

This with a mirth and melody surpassing anything the world-wide traveller had ever listened to.

She pointed her finger at him archly all the time, beating accurately the measure of the music. She ceased with another shower of silvery laughter.

Curry was bewildered, frightened.

"And now, *you!*" she exclaimed with great vivacity; turning on him suddenly and screeching with merry laughter at his wide-open mouth of astonishment:

"I know *you*, too!

> "'You're Captain Jinks of the horse marines;
> You give your horses corn and beans,
> But wasn't cut out for the army.
> You teach young ladies how to dance,
> How to dance, how to dance—'

"Ha! ha! ha!" And, heavens! how she danced here. It was the native, untaught, unstudied grace of Fanchon, the wild, whirling, marvellous finish of Elssler, Taglioni, Celeste, Sangalli—all schools of Terpsichore combined, blended in a new order, a creation, partaking of the characteristics and captivations of each.

"That is 'Madcap Zoè's Dance,'" she naively said, as she concluded without the slightest evidence of fatigue—"that's *mine*—I'm 'Madcap Zoè of the Glen!'"

She was insane. Rosa Moss had gone mad.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOILED AGAIN.

"COME, Cousin Charlie, come, captain, we'll catch butterflies. I was only waiting for you and washing my poor little feet; look at my poor little feet, all torn by the mischievous briars, they play so rough, now don't they? look there!" and Zoè, for we shall for the present adopt the only name by which she would be

called, which she knew in fact, displayed a modest portion of those beautiful limbs all scratched and bruised by her fall of the previous night.

Bill Curry felt pity. Victor looked at the *tournure* of the limb.

Victor understood the case, for he was well read in medical science.

Bill Curry believed Rosa bewitched by the devil, and was positively frightened now at the master he had adopted. Afraid to stay with him, afraid to desert him. Curry spoke,—

"Miss—eh—"

"Call her Zoè—fool—don't you know her name?" said Victor, darting a quick look at his servant.

"Well, Miss Zoè, I ben't the captain. He's the captain," pointing at Forestal.

"Oh, you '*ben't* the captain,' hey, '*ben't*' you? ha! ha! ha! Cousin Charlie wants to be captain, does he?—that's just like him. I recollect now—

> "'The way he's gained his title's by a hobby which he's got,
> Of never letting others pay, however long the shot,
> Whoever drinks at his expense are treated all the same,
> From dukes and lords to cabmen down, he makes 'em drink champagne.
> For Champagne Charley is his name,' etc.

"Oh, Cousin Charlie, Cousin Charlie, it will be the ruin of you—these wild ways—at last. You don't *know*. You don't count the *cost*, you naughty, naughty man—" Then she relapsed into a fragment of the song of which her last words reminded her.

"But if he won't be called captain, Charley, where you are, what *must* I call him? You can't deceive me, though, either of you. I know you. You might as well

tell me, sir, I'm not Wild Zoè—Madcap Zoè of the Glen."

"Have it your own way, Zoè."

"Ah, that's clever of you, Cousin Charlie. If I can't call him *Captain* Jinks I'll call him Jinks. Jinks, how's your horses? Jinks, how's your mamma? Does she cry now? I've got a mamma—she's up there (pointing above), she never cries. Up there they never cry. I shall go up there and be with her when I have stopped crying. Now I'm not good enough."

This appeared to be the only fragment of a recollection left of her former self. And vague and feeble as it is, oh, thank God and the blessed angels, that it is there. That it is there, the last inextinguishable spark—the hope of heaven. It may prove the salvation of her poor, darkened spirit; given up for His wise purposes, in His inscrutable ways, to be tempted and tormented of the devil.

As she spoke these words, the "tears of some Divine despair" rolled down her smooth cheeks, while the same arch look of innocent childish mirth possessed the rest of her visage.

"The tear as it trickled
Was caught by a smile."

"Where's my shoes?—bring 'em along, Jinks. Wait—let me put my shoes and stockings on. Turn your backs. Remember the fate of Peeping Tom of Coventry. Now I'm ready, Cousin Charlie. As you are not captain now, Jinks, you can bring up the rear. Forward, march!"

"Where are you going, Zoè?" asked Victor.

"Oh, anywhere, everywhere, nowhere!" she replied.

"Then come with me. I'll show you a beautiful cave underground, where the gnomes dwell."

"No—you won't, now, Cousin Charlie, will you? Come along; fly

"'Away, then, to the mountains
While the morning sun is shining,
The deer have sought the fountains
And the herd in the shade are reclining.'"

They crossed the glen at the pass below, and climbed the hills by the usual footpath, abandoning which at the summit, they struck off into the dense wood and denser thicket, and descending again, by ways which Curry well knew, reached the cave of Dark Hollow.

Zoè ran about the cave, inside and out, examining and praising everything with the delight of a child released from school for the holidays.

When informed that they would not live there, her disappointment was excessive.

But when told they were going a long journey to see the world, and it was necessary to dress herself up like Cousin Charlie, and they would set out immediately in the boat, which she had been admiring as it lay inverted and hidden under a shelving rock near the water, her rapture was beyond all bounds.

This had been determined on by Victor, and of course acquiesced in by Curry, during another short conference they had seized the opportunity of holding while the poor girl was occupied with the novelties of her new life.

She appeared to retain no more recollection of the past or its scenes than if she had really dropped from the skies, an inhabitant of other spheres, which seemed to her was the case.

"Hurry, Cousin Charlie; where are the things? Let me dress myself. I'll make a beautiful boy, won't I? No, I won't speak a word to anybody I meet—nobody—must I? except you, in a whisper, and Jinks. I *like*

Jinks. I may speak to Jinks, mayn't I? Jinks is going, isn't he? I ain't afraid of Jinks.

"'I'm Captain Jinks of the horse marines,
I often live beyond my means.'

Jinks, you shouldn't live beyond your means; it isn't prudent, and you'll come to want.

"You're pretty shabby now, my boy. Make Cousin Charlie get you a new suit of clothes. Recollect his hobby—he never lets others pay; do you, Charlie?"

The idea of arraying her in a suit of his own was a brilliant one, in the opinion of Victor.

She would strictly obey his every injunction, as he had warned her that, for one act of disobedience, he would bring her straight back to the cave, and take her no more excursions.

Not speaking to a soul on the way, nor even seeming to notice any one who addressed her, was impressed upon her as the most important caution of all.

"You can't hear and you *can't* speak, of course, Zoè. You're a little deaf and dumb cousin of mine, and you're going to college in New York."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Zoè; "that will be glorious. Try me—talk to me, now—you're a stranger—be a stranger, and talk to me."

He did so, and it was wonderful to see the histrionic abilities her abnormal state developed.

Her pantomime was perfect. Every expression of the face and eyes, shrug of the shoulders, and indication which a mute exhibits of indisposition to hold converse with any one distasteful, she mimicked to admiration.

"Bravo! splendid!" cried Victor, enthusiastic and astonished. "Dress yourself, and let's be off."

She went into the cave, and he walked off a short dis-

tance with Curry. This conversation ensued. Victor, after a period of moody reflection, broke the silence.

"You haven't forgot I spared your life?"

"No, cap'n, I hevn't."

"Nor what you promised?"

"No, cap'n."

"And you'll keep your word?"

"I'll do my endeavors, cap'n."

"You'll 'do your endeavors'—that is not what I asked you—what I expect and require. No shirking, fellow!"

"I'm not shirking, cap'n. Speak out, an' see if I be."

"Can I trust you?"

"You knows that best, cap'n."

"Sirrah! I don't like this way of yours. No bandying words with me. Are you ready to do my will—to do my wishes—without being told? Can't you think for yourself? You are more stupid than I took you to be. Come, sir, of what are you thinking?"

"I'm thinking what *you* mean, sir."

"Well?"

"And I don't rightly know."

"Should I tell you, will you carry them out?"

"Is it about this gal?"

"You haven't forgot Watt knocked you down?"

"No, d—n him, I hevn't, an' I'll be even with him. I've swore it."

"It was about this girl, you remember."

"She couldn't help that."

"Ha! you forgive her, then?"

"Cap'n, my 'pinion is, she's suffered 'nough."

"Hum! we couldn't let her go now."

"Cap'n—will you tell me this—is she conjured?"

"What?"

"Have—have you bewitched her? Forgive me, ef I say anythink I shouldn't say—I don't mean it—but she's—she's strange-like—she ain't herself—she don't know us nor nothink."

"She's mad."

"Crazy?"

"Yes, crazy."

"Good Gord!"

"Well, what of it?"

"What of it?"

"Aye, what of it—she's pretty as ever—prettier."

"Oh, cap'n, you couldn't think of—"

"What?"

"You couldn't think of doin' her no harm while she's —she's this a way?"

"Why not—haven't we done her enough harm as it is?"

"But—but—cap'n—"

"Will you stand by me, or—" And Victor's hand expressively sought the handle of his revolver.

"For Gord's sake, cap'n, please listen to me—don't be in a hurry!"

"What is it?"

"Won't she get well?"

"Maybe!"

"How long, fust?"

"In a few weeks—or a month—with quiet—but I can't wait. She's ravishingly beautiful, and something might happen to cause me to lose her again, and I might not be so lucky next time."

"Cap'n, I'll take my bounden oath, she shan't git away. You jest go along with us to New York, so's thinks 'ill look all right, an' I'll undertake to keep her

there all dark, an' when she comes to her senses, I won't stand in your way no longer!"

"*You* stand in my way, you cowardly scoundrel—dare to try! Haven't I told you I've got your dog's neck in a rope now—do you want me to tighten it?"

"No, no, no, cap'n! All I wants is fur you to hold me 'sponsible for the gal. I'll do as I said. I'll bring you word, an' you can come then. Cap'n, I can't see this done—I can't, indeed."

"Why, you miserable poltroon, then you needn't. Go off in the woods there by yourself, and *don't* see—or hear either, or it will be worse for you."

"Oh, cap'n, don't—don't—pray don't!"

"Why, fellow, one would think you were in love with the girl yourself. Didn't I tell you I'd give you your revenge?"

"I ain't got no revenge now—I've had it—I'm sorry for her—Oh, cap'n—cap'n—you has sisters, you say—s'pose—"

"Silence, you puling fool!" thundered Victor. "Come back at dusk, and put her out of sight. It's too late to mince things now."

"How can I put her out of sight?"

"Any way you please—there's a dozen: take your choice."

"*You—mean*—MURDER."

Curry said this with a sickly pallor spreading over his countenance, and big drops of terror gathering on his forehead.

"Well?"

"Cap'n, 'Thou shalt not kill.'"

"Bah! you hypocritical rascal, you did not think of that on Flag-staff Hill."

"That was different. I had a grudge—I was mad—I was in love with that gal—and I was drunk. This is cold-blooded MURDER!"

"You lie, you ruffian!" Here he spoke in low, hot, hissing tones, which caused even Curry to wince, as though it were indeed the breath of a demon he felt on his grizzly cheek.

"You lie—you lie. I have had provocation—I am in a rage—I am in love—consumed with it—and I am drunk—with passion—tempt me no more—be off!"

"Well then, capting," said Curry, quietly, drawing a long wide blade from his clothing, and grasping it firmly in his great brawny right hand, which was unwounded, "then you must kill me fust—it can't be done.

"I see that gal now saying, 'I likes Jinks,' 'I ain't afeard o' Jinks,' which if it ben't my name, leastways she *meant* me, an' it's the same thing. It's saved her life from *me*. *I* can't kill her—*that* much it's done fur her—an' *you* musn't.

"I don't know, though—you is more'n my match, cap'n, an' I love you—I love you. Bill Curry as never hed no brother, an' never loved no man, loves *you*, cap'n!

"Here—kill me—kill *me* now; but spare that gal till we gets to York!"

He tossed his knife into the bushes, dropped upon his knees, tore open his shirt with the same hand which had held the blade, revealing his hirsute breast, and amidst sobs and tears besought Victor, "Kill me—kill me, cap'n, but spare that poor creetur to-day!"

"I will—get up, and come along," said Victor, and left instantly for the cave.

Whatever was his motive, the result was, thus far, advantageous to Rose Moss.

Bill Curry went down to get the boat ready, and soothe his agitated feelings at the same time.

He clearly did not know what to make of himself, and almost half-concluded it was all conjuring—he was conjured also, and that Victor was—

"The devil!" he broke out, abruptly; "somebody's got the boat! Hello! cap'n! Hi! hi! come here!"

Victor rushed towards him, white and breathless, crying out at the same time. "She's gone! she's gone again! we were a couple of fools to leave her alone. She's cheated us, and is off again!"

Curry could do nothing but point out a young man seated in their boat on the lake, and rowing vigorously towards the point of a projecting rock.

Victor instantly presented his revolver to fire, when—

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!" rang out among the echoes of Dark Hollow, in no other possible accents than Madcap Zoè's, or—

> "—him the sprite,
> Whom maids by night
> Oft meet in glen that's haunted."

She turned the boat with considerable skill, and soon brought its bow, with a rush, up between the rocks.

"Cousin Charlie, how do you like me? I ain't dumb *yet*, you know. How de do, Jinks?"

Why, who on earth could help liking the charming fellow?

He was dressed in a short, black velvet coat, with wide sleeves, cut jet-buttons, loose sack style, which fell over the hips, disguising the figure, while the continuations were a delicate pearl color, fitting close to the limbs, as was the fashion of the day.

Victor's Paris boots fitted her to a nicety; for his feet

and hands were marvellously small, and she carried a pair of his Couvaisseur kid-gloves, the color of the pantaloons, stuck in one pocket of the coat, while a milk-white handkerchief, a marvel of texture, peeped out of another.

On her head, amid that wilderness of frizzled golden hair, which looked more like a bird's nest than ever, tucked and fastened up like a boy's, the mode perfectly concealed, she wore a dainty little roguish black velvet cap, with a wide silk band fastened with a jet buckle, to match the coat buttons.

The ends of this ribbon floating behind had the appearance of a plume.

"And how did he like her—how did Jinks like her?" They looked their admiration, and told it as well as it might be conveyed in words.

Victor offered to kiss "Cousin Zoè—"

"No, you don't, Charlie—

"'Look out there,
I'm a-going to shoot,'

she sung, from a popular air—she seemed haunted by such fragments—as she drew his veritable Derringer and presented it dramatically between them with a mock frown, followed by her usual rippling laughter.

"Naughty boy, I know you—I told you I was afraid of you, but I wasn't afraid of Jinks—I like Jinks. Well, I don't *mis*like *you*, Charlie; but you're *so* wild, you know. So am I, but I am innocent. But you, Cousin Charlie, oh, *you* are *so* wicked. Topsy was a child of light compared to you.

"Still, you can't help it—can you, Charlie?

"'Some time ago I had a beau,
And Charlie was his name;
A smart young fellow fond of show,
Who wished to cause me shame;
But from my feet I spurned the swell,
As I will now explain,
Although he thought he liked me well,
He better loved champagne.'
For Champagne Charlie was,' etc.

"Ha! ha! ha! Stand back, Charlie—it *might* go off, pop, just like a bottle of cham!"

Victor was afraid to claim the pistol—afraid to ask any questions lest he might awaken some reminiscence in her disordered brain, the consequence of which he could not calculate.

He depended upon his cunning to get possession of the weapon the first occasion that offered.

He had not, for a moment, thought of this other pistol, although he had picked up the one which Rose discharged, before making the descent into the ravine.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Victor; but it was not very hearty mirth—rather dry, and suggestive of his nick-namesake.

"Put it up, Zoè, put it up! Wait in the boat now, and we'll soon be off. Be quiet—no noise—we will begin to travel." She sat still, as bidden, singing in a low tone, but with wonderful sweetness,

"Silence, silence, make no noise nor stir."

The boat was soon freighted with all they wished to carry, in the shape of Victor's, also Zoè's, clothing.

They made the trip over both lakes, and near the lower dam was Victor's close-carriage and best pair of horses concealed in the wood.

Fortunately for all, save Rose, there was no one in

sight, and the dense forest soon closed behind them in the direction of Woodford.

They arrived safely and unsuspected in New York, but had scarcely landed at the ferry than they lost Rose at once, under circumstances so peculiar that they will be detailed hereafter.

Victor returned in a few days to Millburn to make that memorable proposal of his to Blanche, which met with the reception we have recorded.

Curry was left in New York to, if possible, recover traces and repossession of Rose Moss.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NEWS.

GRIGG got snake-bitten.

Not metaphorically, on hearing of Beetle's success in the snake-charming line, but actually in the flesh of his heel.

"A black snake bit him on the heel" was not, but might have been, written of Grigg.

A fever set in, and Uncle Bob, who had taken him to Bachelor's Hall, in order to have something which Beetle loved in Beetle's place as near himself as might be, nursed him carefully through it, with the tenderness of an old woman.

No impertinence, if you please, about old women being tough. GOD bless them—they're more tender than they're tough.

Redfern always maintained it was the "New York fever."

"The snake bit him, I don't deny that," he said; "but he misses the other boy, and no wonder; all miss him—the dog misses him, the squirls miss him, the toads and terrapins miss him, I miss him all day long, and all night in bed, and the bugs miss him."

It was truly pathetic, and Bob broke down at this culmination. A tear ran along the bridge of his nose to the fiery tip of that feature, and evaporated, almost hissing as though it had dropped on a red-hot "spider."

However, the snake died instantly, and the boy's wound healed.

Bob, acting on his convictions of duty and humanity, called several times on Grub without finding that worthy at home; or, if so, sufficiently sober to entertain anything but a select company of convivial friends, among whom were Todd, Grimes, and, of all men, Knob Wallis.

Burying was dull now, and as he could not put the bodies down, from which the spirit had departed, he was putting the spirits down from which the body had departed.

But Todd, from whom it came, knew how to supply the semblance of that with drugs, etc., after he had baptized and drowned the liquor to suit the market.

We must do him the justice to say that whenever he "made a night of it," out, he always first sent along a bottle or two of his "own particular."

Of course selfishness had nothing to do with such manifest liberality, or he would not have set the example, and encouraged its imitation as he did, calling out: "Pitch in boys, pitch in, an' take your trick early!" Ah, Todd, "was a trump," all his "drouthy neebors" agreed!

At last Redfern succeeded in obtaining Grub's consent that Grigg should be sent, in charge of the driver of the

down coach, and by him transferred to the coachee on the lower stage, who would put him in charge of the railroad conductor, who should deliver him at Jersey City ferry "right-side-up-with-care," barring accidents.

The boy was smart enough to cross the Hudson himself, and find the first floor front, of 36 Chatham street, where Beetle now resided in solitary grandeur.

Here the two lads would dwell together again, and run an independent pony team.

Redfern kindly undertook the cost of transportation, which was a "*sine qua non*" with the unnatural father.

Accordingly, one afternoon, as Beetle arrived home, at the extremity of his sharp little wits as to whom he could safely transfer the conduct of the "snake-show," he was surprised and delighted to find Grigg perched on the back of his sole chair, an extremely rickety one, and vigorously enervating himself with his, Beetle's, own short, black pipe and pigtail.

To see these two boys meet, laughing and crying with joy, would have made old Diogenes get out of his tub, slap Alexander on the back, and reply to that monarch's query of "Is there anything I can do for you, Diogenes?"—"Certainly there is, old boy—I have seen Beetle and Grigg meet—lend me twenty-five cents to get a drink—this is not such a bad world after all."

The "show business" was soon settled—"What ef I *wor* bit," said Grigg, "I ain't afeard o' snakes a mite—'wake snakes an' come to judgment'—where is he?"

And "Watchman" was forthwith inspected. He was found, like a model M. P., coiled up in a corner, fast asleep—but he had his rattle yet.

The boys exchanged all their news and confidences, and drew up a plan for the campaign immediately;

one of the important moves of which was "on the enemy's works," for the recapture of Miss Rosa Moss.

"Curry was here, sure as a gun, Grigg," confided Beetle, "but I no sooner see Mr. Watt, and telled him, than Bill dissipaired like a genelman's gold watch, or a lady's pocket-han'kercher at Signor Blitzes. I ain't see him, nor nobody ain't see him sence."

"He was feard o' you," suggested Grigg.

"Well he might be, ef he's got anythink to do with that business," said Beetle, resolutely, like "Jack the Giant Killer."

"Have you seen Mr. Watt to-day?" asked Grigg.

"Yes—he's well—I see him a minute. He's orful busy though, I tell you; he asked me ef I had any news, an' I said not yet, but I *will* have, and he smiled, so kind like, an' told me to 'drop in whenever I was 'round his way, he'd all'ys be glad to see me, but, maybe, he couldn't talk to me always, for,' says he, 'my boy, I'm busy 'bout the 'fairs of our Millburn friends too—Miss Blanche, and her father, and Rosa.

"'If you hear anythink or see anythink,' says he, 'let me know at once, day or night, ef you have to get passed on here by the police.'

"Grigg, he's the splendidest man I ever see sence I was born. He's so big, an' has got sich big whiskers, but he talks jest like he was your big brother, an' you don't feel shy o' him at all."

"I bet he could lick that Victor Forestal—I don't like *him!*" said Grigg."

"Neither do I, but he's mighty strong. Bill Curry used to tell me what Mr. Forestal could do. He could stand and jump 'cross Broadway in two jumps, and pull hisself up to the limb of a tree with one hand, and put

his chin over the top o' his hand half a dozen times, and pitch Bill Curry over his head with one hand too—and jest see how big Bill Curry is."

"He's a orful liar, I don't believe him," said the incredulous Grigg, shaking his head.

"I do!" asserted Beetle.

"I bet Mr. Watt could lick him!" persisted Grigg, and while they are settling this important question to boys, let us see what keeps John Watt so busy.

. . . . . .

John is seated at a table which is doing very active—or rather passive—duty at this time as a desk.

The extent to which he has evidently been muddling his brains with statistics would be positively alarming to any woman who might have the felicity to call him husband.

But, alas, for the luck of those who are marrying every day in such numbers, to find out before the end of a year, that real, good wear and tear—not rip and swear—men, who "will wash," are terribly in the vocative, no woman yet does own him.

Therefore, he sits unmolested, undeterred by feminine solicitude, until he is almost on the point of declaring the whole thing—whatever it is—with Stephen Blackpool, "a' a muddle—a' a muddle."

Poor old John. Look at him there, will you?

Rows of books in front of him—where did he get them, I wonder?—quires of paper, written over, drawn over, figured over; some signed, sealed and waiting to be delivered, when, of course, others will follow. Tape, ribbons, sealing wax, a patent spring-stamp, ink all over the papers and under the table, as though the "slinging" business had been pretty brisk while it lasted, and there was likely to be a right smart shower after all.

Now he scratches his head again—no go, John; you have undoubtedly exhausted yourself for this time, and there is not another idea to be got at for love or money.

I' faith though, *we* have hit it. Love *and* money. They are the twin giants who have reduced our interesting friend to this condition.

At last he dashes down the pen, which he picks up again with twice the alacrity. He had thrown it, full of ink, right full in the fair face of a page of writing, which he had been secretly congratulating himself he had not blotted the moment before.

"Confound it—of course—why not?" exclaimed John, philosophically, as he deposited the mischief-maker elsewhere.

Ah, now we shall have his thoughts, for he is going to smoke, and smokers when alone always talk to themselves—when required in novels.

"Let's see—the first thing is to repay the loan to the bank and have my cross returned to the safe-deposit vaults.

"That was a pretty risky thing, but nothing, now it's over. Still, thank Heaven, for I would not have parted with it for any other sake in the world than hers who gave it to me, my mother"—he looked upward with filial pious eyes—"and Blanche's—Blanche's."

As he spoke her name he bowed his head upon his hand and seemed to give himself up to melancholy thoughts for a while.

Only a while. He arose from the table and continued his self-communing as he slowly paced the room.

"With these documents I can 'go ahead' now, as the Americans say, despite of all the Forestals and Wall streets in the country.

"Wall street itself will be as eager as before it was chary. We can commence operations with the new company within the month. Bravo, Father Millburn, this will be glorious news for you—and Blanche."

Always coming back to Blanche: how singular!

"Dr. Daws, noble old man, he will be delighted too—I must post my letter to him so as to save the mail—what time is it? Nearly noon—how quick the morning goes.

"What astonishing good luck I have had of late; there is an old adage, 'It never rains but it pours.' I believe it—good or bad luck it is the same. Let it come, all the good luck in fortune's cornucopia at once, I can stand it. I have had my share of the other kind, God knows!"

Here he heaved a profound sigh.

"Perhaps my star is again in the ascendant—ah, my star—that reminds me I must look after those things today. Now if I could only get some tidings of poor little Rose, I should really think myself in luck. Blanche must be terribly uneasy." Still "Blanche"—"Blanche."

A low, respectful knock at the door.

"Come in!"

"Letters, sir, for you, and a telegram."

"Leave them." The waiter did so, and left himself.

"Millburn post-mark—from Dr. Daws," said John in reference to the letter, and, glancing at the other envelope—"Hum! Cable despatch: nothing new I suppose!"

He opened the doctor's letter, one little paragraph in which suffused his countenance, his heart, his soul with more unutterable rapture than often beams in the human face divine It read thus—

"Blanche and her intended have quarrelled and parted, never to meet again. Indeed it is impossible they should. Particulars, at discretion, when we meet. All well there, otherwise. At least I conclude so, or I should know the contrary."

Why, old fellow—hold on, John—what are you about? don't go crazy, don't be a fool, don't make an ass of yourself, old fellow!

It's no use to talk to him, he can't hear a word now.

He has tossed his cigar, fire-end, down into the ink-stand—good shot, my boy—and is going through that same ridiculous violent exercise we spoke of before, capering all around the room—the fandango—the can-can, what can—*can* you call it?

Snapping his fingers and scattering his books and papers about in inextricable confusion. Never mind, such a thing as that will have to come to an end sooner or later; violence and excitement entail reaction and exhaustion. Go on, old boy, we're in no hurry—keep it up—ha! we thought so.

He sat down in his chair and laughed, and cried, and shouted, until a thundering "ra-ta-ta tat-tat-ta" at his door caused him to cease these ecstasies, and with the little breath that was left him bid the visitor enter.

It was the waiter, who had turned two shades lighter through alarm.

"I-I-I be-be-beg pardon, sir—did you call?"

"Call? ha! ha! ha! I should think I did. Did you hear me?"

"Ye-yes, sir. We *thought* we heard something."

He entered deferentially, and deprecatingly examined the bell-rope.

"I should think you had. Oh, that's all right. I

didn't want you. I should have rung had I done so. I was merely enjoying myself over a piece of good news. Take that, my man: drink my health and be happy too."

It was a dollar greenback. The waiter picked it up from the floor, and almost bowed himself backwards over the banisters as he closed the door.

John felt so much a child that as he sat there he threw both heels up in the air and shouted such a hearty "ha! ha! ha!" that it's a wonder the waiter didn't come back for another dollar.

"Decidedly," said John, slapping his hands together with an emphatic bang, "decidedly my star is rising towards the zenith! My star has risen!

"Hello! this despatch may need an answer." He tore it open, and read along the narrow strip of paper to the end, his color coming and going as he read. Then, rising slowly and majestically to his full erect height, his countenance and form underwent a change, and wore from that moment a grace and dignity which never left him during life.

His voice was low and mournful when he spoke again. Deep and solemn as an organ tone in a requiem mass, yet full, oh, so full of heartfelt tender sorrow.

The same dear John whom all of us have loved, but awed and sublimated by the voice of GOD, who calls and points him to HIS vineyard.

"Dead—dead—dead! My brother—oh my brother! Said I that my star had risen? Behold me, LORD, prostrate in the dust. THY hand, only, raiseth and striketh down the quick and the dead!"

As he sinks upon his knees and communes with Heaven, let us close the door softly and reverently and

leave him alone, spiritually face to face with his dead brother and "OUR FATHER, who liveth and reigneth forever."

CHAPTER XX.

OFF THE TRACK.

BEETLE and Grigg made a morning call in Bleecker street, arriving just in time to bid our Cornish friend good-by.

"I am glad to see you together, my lads—keep out of bad company, don't learn to steal, drink, swear, chew, smoke, or tell lies, and you will live to be—who knows? —maybe President and Vice-President of the United States. Don't forget Whittington, Lord Mayor of London and Ben Franklin.

"I am going to Millburn, but will return in a few weeks." Patting them on the head, John left them, with a tear washing a clean channel down their somewhat smeared faces, and the yellow cars soon bore him round the curve out of sight.

As he approached Newark at the highest speed of the iron horse, another train shot by, destined for the city he had quit an hour before.

Rapid as was its transit two travellers' recognition of each other was mutual and instantaneous, but neither betrayed the fact beyond a closer compression of the lips, a scarcely perceptible gathering of the brows, but a most decided and unmistakable gleam of bitter hatred on the one side, and calm defiance on the other.

The momentary flushed and pallid faces thus communicated with the speed and pent wrath of lightning, and as instantly flashed each on its opposite course.

They were John Watt and Victor Forestal.

"D—n him!" muttered Victor to himself. "The field is open to the beggar now. Half my failure may be owing to him, the undermining sneaking scoundrel. A Cornish miner, hey? Take care I don't blow his clever burrow about his ears. I have never known luck to attend the man or woman—or child either—ha! ha! —who crossed the path of Victor Forestal.

"This crossing my path now was suggestive, ominous—we must soon meet; oh, for an augury of the result of that meeting."

At this precise moment he felt himself being tilted violently and suddenly to the left; he had just time to grasp the arms of his seat with superhuman strength when he saw the front of the car rushing toward him with the velocity of light, he felt himself rising toward the roof, and sinking, it seemed to him, to an unfathomable depth, and that was all.

He knew no more, until fifteen minutes later he was resuscitated, with a few unimportant scratches and bruises upon his body, none upon his fair face, the only passenger out of thirty-eight who was not killed, crippled or otherwise injured by the collision with a baggage train just half an hour behind time.

As he walked along, and viewed the wreck, where over a score of agonized human creatures were screaming for assistance, or groaning in helpless anguish under the piled *débris* of the shattered cars, he exclaimed, with an oath:

"D—n the wretches—what a horrible noise they make! It would be better to knock them on the head at once.

How long, I wonder, before another engine and train comes along—shall I lose the whole day here?"

He did not lend a touch of his skilled hands, or a particle of his cool, clear, intelligent judgment to the rescue or relief of his suffering fellow-beings.

"I asked for a sign, but I should be sorry to take all that wreck and ruin for one—ugh! let me forget it," he said.

Two hours after that, he was seated in the back room of an obscure drinking-place at the foot of Christopher street, New York, talking to Bill Curry.

"Any news?"

"Another railroad accident—that's all, cap'n."

"That's no news; we've one or two every day. I was on the train."

"Railly! How did it 'cur, cap'n?"

"Who knows—who cares? As usual, I suppose—somebody drunk—everybody careless—nobody to blame. Verdict, 'serves them right—too many people, anyhow.' What about the girl?"

"She was took sing'lar."

"Took! Nobody took her?"

"Well, seized."

"How seized? Did the police stop her?"

"I wish they did. No, cap'n, I mean *that fit*—the same thing she had up in the glen, you know."

"Oh! I'm a little shaken, I believe, with that infernal collision. You remember I told you she was likely to come to her senses, for a while, at any moment. When I saw that shuddering and drowsiness coming on her again, I dreaded it, and meant to tell you to get hold of her; but what's the use? She might, she would have denounced us to the first listener, and even my position wouldn't have saved us.

"There was nothing for it but to let her go, and run the chances of keeping her in sight without being seen ourselves, and capturing her the first opportunity."

"Well, it's sing'ler. It's the most sing'lerest thing I ever see. Jest that minute she was jest as sweet upon me, calling me 'Jinks,' an' 'ole Jinks,' an' sich, an' all on a suddint she goes off in one o' them trimbles like, an' shets her eyes like she was 'sleep, an' when she opens 'em an' sees me ag'in, she give one screech, an' runs like a wild-cat all along by ther Battery, an' up into Whitehall street."

"How far did you keep her in sight?"

"Till she got up there among all them 'busses an' waggins an' kerridges. Then ther devil couldn't see her no longer. She dodged in an' out among 'em till I thought she'd be runned over an' killed every minnit. Howsever, she got clean away, an' I come back to you. It warn't my fault, cap'n. I was fear'd to 'tract the p'lice's 'tention, an' then, to tell ther truth, I was feared o' her. She was in her senses, an' she might o' pinted me out, and had me took. I'd jest as leaf Knob Wallis got me as these fellows here. It 'ud be all the same think, an' go putty hard with me, cap'n, for all *you* could do. I didn't mind ther pistol she hed a mite. She didn't seem to know she hed it. Leastways, I didn't see her draw none."

"Now you see I was right, and we might as well have finished the job at the cave."

"Cap'n, I won't 'pose you agin."

"I should think not. But hearken to me. There's a lot—hundreds—of cellar saloons along where you saw her last, and, take my word for it—"

"She went inter one o' them, you think?"

"I do."

"Can you 'pend on them 'tectives?"

"D—n them! An infernal set of mercenary scoundrels! You see how they acted up there in Millburn, and down here in the city, don't you?"

"Ha! ha! ha! Lord bless you, cap'n, you bought the hull lot off; cheap, too—how much, cap'n?"

"Never mind. Now the other side can bid again—*may* have done so. I don't depend on *them* a particle. If I can prevent them meddling, that's all I care for. I can manage myself; I have other tools, you know—the 'independent voters,' and 'ward politicians.'"

"Ha! ha! ha! Cap'n, you knows the ropes, you does!"

"But there's one at work against us worth all the rest put together."

"Who's he?"

"The fellow they call Marlin. He's spooney on the girl—going to marry her, 'for better, for worse.'"

"I wish he had found her for wuss, now!"

"Yes, *now*. D—n your infernal intermeddling."

"Never mind, cap'n; I'll keep a eye on that Marlin. Them, as you know, can give ther sign, will pint him out to me, an' we'll put him on the wrong track, or we'll bust him up *on* the track like them poor creeturs was this morning."

"No more of that—it turns my stomach. Here, landlord, got any brandy?"

"No, sir; none 'at *you* would drink; got fine old whiskey, sir—can't be beat."

"Give us a bottle. Now, Curry, where's that boy, Beetle?"

"I see him not a hour ago. There's another with him, from Millburn, now."

"Ha! who's he?"

"A boy named Grigg—ole Grub, the grave-digger's brat. He used to be with Redfern an' Beetle up there al'ys."

"What's *he* doing here? Is that another dodge?"

"No, cap'n, I 'spect not. He jes' run away too like the other boy, an' come here to be with him."

"Did they see *you?*"

"I'm too sharp for *that*, now, cap'n, sence you warned me. They was selling hextrys, 'Another dreadful railroad accident on the New Jersey Central—'"

"Hold your tongue I bade you!"

"I beg your parding, cap'n. The littlest one had a box under his arm, but it wasn't a 'shine 'em up.'"

"I don't care what it was. Now, above all things, I warn you to look out for those boys. The acute little devils can worm in and out, without being suspected, when you would have your eye on a man in no time. And I know that infernal little wretch, Beetle. He is well named. He is worse than a ground-hog, and you can't tell what hole or corner he may be in till you have poked straws into *all* of them!"

"Ha! ha! ha! cap'n, you are *so* pleasant."

"He is devoted to Watt and Rose and—and Blanche—d—n him, I will wring his neck like a shrimp some day!"

"All right, cap'n, we'll be even with 'em!"

"'*We?*'—never mind! If *I* don't—but it is time to be off from here. That 'whiskey-slinger' has got his ear cocked now—take care I don't pull it for him."

This remark, in an audible tone, caused the landlord to be extremely busy among his bottles and glasses.

"Mind the hints I've given you, Curry, and no more

blundering, Marplot, or you and I may quarrel when we come to settle accounts.

"Meet me a week from to-day—in the evening, mark me—at the cave." This he whispered.

He then called the landlord, threw down a five-dollar bill with the remark, "No change," slipped a ten into the hands of Curry, turned on his heel, and disappeared among the crowd outside.

The landlord opened the note, and made a note of admiration of his eyes as he saw the denomination. Then he said to Curry, familiarly:

"That's a nobby swell, he is—a perfect gent. Who is he?"

Said Curry—drawing the long, wide blade of the unsheathed bowie-knife sufficiently into the landlord's view to cause the sunlight to flash from it into his eyes, and bring the water, mixed with whiskey, into those orbs —"Ef you wants to know all about *him* an' *me* ax questions, an' I'll answer 'em. Ef you wants *to hear from us again* jest mention us at all, to your wife an' chil'en even, an' bid 'em good-by at the same time."

The landlord grew pale, and Curry swaggered out into the street, with the almost untouched bottle of whiskey in the pocket of his "cut-away" coat.

"Ef they'd ben a leetle civiler I'd a told 'em where they'd find the gal, darn 'em," muttered the landlord resentfully.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEW-DROP INN.

MARLIN, who has been even more of a mystery than we had intended, demands our attention as a person of more consequence in this history than has perhaps been surmised.

He now comes upon the stage, and proceeds to enact an interesting and important part.

Blanche knew that he loved Rose Moss tenderly and faithfully. That through many, many years of absence, suffering, and peril in battle, in camp, and loathsome prison, at sea and on shore, wherever he had been, although no letters nor messages passed between the two for years and years, and he even had not known whether his beautiful betrothed remained true to his image and idea, he had borne his faith unwavering, his honor untarnished through all the vicissitudes of that period of separation.

"Joe is *my* Joe, dear Blanche, and I shall be his, at the fitting moment, when he shall ask me. It is agreed between us, and dear, old Uncle Jobson is as impatient as we are."

This conversation occurred on the very night of poor Rosa's abduction. He had arrived in the village, or rather returned to it, only the day before, and immediately sought out the cottage of Uncle Jobson, to which he had a thousand times been invited by the old man, who loved him like a second father, in lieu of the actual one who had discarded him.

As has been stated, they had been shipmates and messmates, but under peculiar circumstances.

Old Jobson was a boatswain in the U. S. Navy, and in that capacity had served through the whole war.

His fine, sailor-like qualities, and conduct in action, had frequently recommended him for promotion, which he always refused on principle.

"I'm a old sea-dog," he said, "and refinement and book-larnin' never would stick to me. I'd be out o' place among them fuss and feather folks; they don't suit me an' I don't suit them. Jest let me alone, and don't give me nothing but my share of grog, pig-tail and prize money, and Jeems Jobson's content!"

From that time the old man was annoyed with no more threats of promotion. It appeared to be quietly conceded he was somewhat cracked, and possibly he was, for he had received all manner of hard knocks on the crown, from all sorts of friends and enemies.

Marlin, who had as mad a hankerin' or grand a passion for the sea as the other, when the war broke out acted up to his conscientious convictions, and joined the South.

There were captures on both sides made at sea, and, so it happened, each in turn had become the temporary jailor or custodian of the other.

It was not at all likely that unheard-of cruelties or atrocities were perpetrated by either, during this captivity, on the person of the other.

On the contrary, respecting the sincerity, bravery, self-sacrifice and many noble qualities the other displayed and tenderly mindful of home, mutual friends and "auld lang syne," their regard for each other grew into the most devoted, filial and parental affection.

When the Kearsarge sunk the Alabama—a few days

afterwards—old Jobson, on a bender in the streets of an adjacent English town, met Joe Marlin, similarly amusing himself, but not to a great extent, until his admiralty could dispose of stock enough to provide him another ship. The two struck hands, talked no more of struck flags, but struck a bee-line for the nearest "Hinglish Hinn," and sat down together cosily, as old salts should, "hover a glass o' 'alf-an'-'alf."

Then Jobson told Marlin he, himself, was getting too old and stiff to be knocked about on land and sea any longer, that he was going home as soon as he could, and settle down "'long o' Kitty an' little Rose, in Millburn."

And Joe said he was going—in that neighborhood—and if it wasn't disagreeable to him, Jobson, and was agreeable to her, the lady in question, he'd like to "settle down 'long o' little Rose" too. And then and there that part of it had been arranged.

When the old man did get home, it was only to pay Simples, Grimes, Grub, and the rest of them, the expenses for the last sickness and the burial of his only remaining sister, "poor, little Rose's" mother, and assume the entire parental charge and care of his niece.

Dr. Daws, of course, would not take a cent from the old man, for his services.

His remark was, "I'm rich—wish you were—glad to render service if I could—sorry I couldn't—keep your money." Then followed a big pinch of snuff and a sonorous blowing of the nose, with which flourish of trumpets the doctor left.

Of course, Rosa had loved Joseph before. But it had been "on the sly." When he returned, as has been stated, it was all open and above board. All, or almost all, the communication the lovers had held, in fact, the

only information either got of the other, during this long absence, was by means of the old man. We have seen how the following night the unbridled wickedness of Victor Forestal sundered them again, under circumstances far more distressing than any which had preceded.

Who Marlin was, Rosa had kept a profound secret from Blanche. She imparted no more than that he was a boy-lover, who had returned after many years absence, himself and his passion matured in the interval.

His own incognito Marlin had no difficulty in preserving, for it would require more than mortal penetration to identify the confident, full-grown, strong-voiced, bristly-bearded man of twenty-five, with the downy-cheeked, bashful Alexis of nine years before.

This task was rendered easier by the terrible event which hastened his departure the very next day, resolved to return with Rosa to the spot from whence she had been so ruthlessly torn, or never set eyes upon it himself again.

The poor fellow started out in the character of the avenger, and woe betide the authors of the misery of these faithful lovers should he overhaul them He was true indeed as the needle to the pole.

He had beat the woods, roads, lanes and by paths of the whole neighborhood, even penetrating the homes of the vicinity where inquiry was feasible or promised results.

Ever disappointed, finding every effort futile, but never for a moment discouraged or deterred, he extended the circle of his investigations wider and wider until it led him also into the maelstrom of all crime and mystery, New York city.

Here he had decided she was, and here he was resolved to find her did her suffering spirit still inhabit its fair earthly tenement.

If not, he would discover her sad remains, did an atom of them exist to identify, and give them holy sepulture.

His nautical instincts and habits, which had become second nature, led him first to visit all the docks and quays and usual haunts of seafaring men.

Innumerable Captains Cuttle and Sol Gills turned up during these expeditions.

But although the latter were "chock-full of science," and the former were sure she was "drown–ded," neither by hook or by crook or the resources of science could he discover any clue to the lost girl or throw any light on her present whereabouts.

Numerous Jack Bunsbys gave him an opinion as was an opinion, but "it was nothing more." Like the chap in Wordsworth's poetry—

"A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him-
And it was nothing more."

So Jack Bunsby's opinion was just about as oracular as usual, and Rose Moss was not discovered yet.

Marlin had not suspected Victor or Bill Curry or anybody particularly, but he started in search of her as a boy would playing "hide-a-whoop," as an astronomer might seek for the lost pleiad, or as Columbus on his voyage of discovery of the New World—only Columbus had better data.

Like Micawber, he expected "something to turn up," or, like that individual towards the last, in his desperation resolved to turn something up himself if it took him to Australia.

In now one of these moods, then another, hardly knowing what to do next, he was for the hundredth time perambulating all that lower portion of the city which abuts

upon Fulton and Catharine ferries; trips over which he had repeatedly made, visiting Brooklyn, Williamsburgh, Green and Hunter's Point to the extremity of Long Island City, and even crossed to Blackwell's Island.

From these he had invariably returned jaded, worn down in body and mind, yet determined in spirit as ever, never to abandon the search but with life itself.

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick:" how extreme then must be the prostration of poor Marlin's, in which her light was almost wholly extinguished.

If grief can indeed break the human heart, his was almost "*in articulo mortis.*"

His face, lately so ruddy, so animated by the fires of youth, health and requited love, was now haggard, pale, and desperate in expression to the point of ferocity.

His cheeks and eyes were sunken, and his gait and attitude were those of a man prematurely old from the combined assaults of a guilty conscience and a mortally diseased frame.

As he crept up and down the crowded and filthy purlieus of Gotham, which constitute the shadow to the radiant splendor of the West End, peering with his sorrow-dimmed eyes into the damp and dark cellars which belched their unwholesome vapors as from so many noisome mouths upon the passengers, he appeared like

> "An old man wandering as in quest of something,
> Something he could not find—he knew not what."

"Bloats," "bummers," "dead-beats," and "roughs"—for such was their class designation—as they staggered into or out of these "saloon-cellars," brushed by him lightly and gave him a look of almost pity, as one whose situation compared with his own was indeed to be commiserated—notwithstanding his "good clo'es."

Occasionally Marlin rallied from this, plucked up a spirit, as a candle will flicker and flare up in the socket.

Then he would dart into one of these rum-holes, call the prettiest of the waiter-girls with something of his old spirit—when she would perceive the stranger was really not old, or ill or ugly, only sad,—so sad, beneath all his disguise of gayety—and he would call for something to drink for himself and her too, make her sit down beside him and tell her short stories and adventures with all the sprightliness and jollity of a man-o'-war's man.

In the midst of these an occasional unconscious tear would trickle down and mingle with his grog, not unperceived however by the pretty waiter-girls, each of whom had, or had lost, a "Johnny Shoemaker," or other true love.

Then he would leave, forgetting to ask the girl for his change, or, more probably, meaning her to keep it.

By dint of frequent repetitions of this sort of thing, with which, for the honor of woman's nature, however depraved through the vices of men, we *will* say money had nothing to do, poor Marlin came to be regarded by half the pretty waiter-girls of the neighborhood of the Old Bowery, William street and Oliver, as an object of tender and respectful interest, as "the sailor gentleman crossed-in-love."

This, with feminine sagacity, intuition, they had only inferred—Marlin told none of them, or anybody whatever, his secret, although he never omitted an opportunity of gleaning the least item of intelligence in the forlorn hope that some feather might show which way the gale had blown the girl of his heart, on what rock?

she had struck, in what unknown seas gone down forever.

For, by the time we now present him, he did not believe she could possibly be living, or some fragment of the wreck must float to him over the human billows to incite him to the rescue.

In one of these moods he entered, on a certain day, one of the largest and finest of these saloons, immediately above and adjoining the Old Bowery. He had taken his seat at a beer table near the handsome organ—for this was comparatively a palace—and received from the hands of one of the nymphs his usual lunch.

It consisted of brown-bread, Switzer-kase and sausage, washed down with unlimited lager, and "scumbled," to use an art term, with tobacco-smoke. Having preserved a decent silence during the period of his repast, the waiter-girl, who sat near him, spoke as follows:

"You don't come round at night?"

"No."

"Why don't you?"

"Why—I—don't know—I'm tired and go to bed—never thought about it."

"Well, you should: there's lots o' sport at night—everybody comes then."

The remarks were of no importance, yet, as the day wore on and night approached, Marlin, who was still plodding his now almost objectless rounds, thought of them again.

He had half resolved to go to sea, and try what effect its bracing air and accustomed duties would have towards reconciling him to life, and the world in which he had nearly lost all interest, when he was aroused from his habitual abstraction by a right smart jog on the elbow

from a remarkably small and attenuated boy who stood on tiptoe for the purpose.

"Mister, I *say*, Mister, hello!"

"Get out!" exclaimed Marlin, rather more roughly than his wont.

"But, Mister," pursued the small boy, "come here—up here by the rails—don't look at me—don't say a word 'cept what I ask you—don't make no noise—I want to speak to you. Don't be afeard, I ain't going to hurt yer!"

The idea of the atomy's hurting *him* caused even Marlin to smile.

The small boy perceived it by the gaslight, which streamed up from an underground cellar, through a transparency, seductively lettered "Dew-Drop Inn." He was encouraged, and plucked him by the skirt of his coat towards a corner, more obscure and better suited to the proposed conference.

"What do you want, you little rascal? Five cents to get mother a loaf o' bread, hey? Why don't you go home and go to bed, you little dog, and work for your living in the daytime?"

"Never you mind, Mister. I ain't no beggar, an' I do work for my living, too. I don't ax odds o' nobody. Now stoop down here, I don't want to holler, an' *you* don't want me to nuther. Be your name Marlin?"

At this question our friend was all astonishment, but reflecting that there was nothing concealable from the "*gamin*" the world over, and there could be no immediate danger from the admission—besides he always went well-armed—he answered

"Suppose it is?"

"Well, but suppose it isn't? Now, Mister, don't fool. I ain't a foolin'—be you the man they call Marlin?"

"I am."

"Hooray! Hooray! Hooray—Ti-i-i-ger-r-r!—Sky-rocket!"

This exuberance was confined to the dimensions, not of a horse laugh, but of a hoarse whisper. Marlin became interested.

"Hev you a pencil 'bout you, mister?"

"I don't know; let me see."

"Well, ef you hevn't, I *hev*—here!"

"What do I want with a pencil?"

"You want to give me a receipt."

"A receipt! For what?"

"For a note."

"What note?"

"A note I've got in my breeches."

"A letter—for me?"

"For Mister Marlin; that's you, ain't it?"

"Why couldn't you say so at once, you little rogue? Give it to me—give it to me, instantly?"

"Not for Joseph," slyly observed the remarkably acute little creature, who seemed, as he stuck his thumb to his excuse for a nose, and wiggled the fingers significantly in the face of the grown man, some wizen, fairy changeling, about three thousand years or so old—co-temporary with the Ptolemies—and not a boy at all.

"Not for Joe—oh, no, no! not for Joseph—not ef he knows it!"

"Not for Joseph? Why, what do you mean, you little rascal? You said it was for me."

Marlin did not know the popular song, and hence had nearly betrayed his *incognito*.

"Yes, I said it was for you, an' I will give it to you, when I gets the receipt, not before; that receipt 'll be worth money to us, or I'm a Dutchman."

"O—h!" exclaimed Marlin, and tearing a leaf out of his pocket book, he wrote upon it—'Received of—' *Who* shall I say?"

"Beetle!"

"Is that your name?"

"No, I'm named 'Grigg.'"

"Singular names," and he continued to write—'Received of Beetle a note.' "Well—'a note?'—how shall I describe it, my lad? what is it about?"

"Oh, you'd better read it, stoopid; now, no running away, mind. I've got you by the coat-tail, an' I'll call one o' them fellers with a door-plate on his breast—a p'liceman—in no time, so mind you!"

He opened a little three-cornered note, and read:

"36 CHATHAM STREET, NEW YORK,
"*August* —, 186—."

"Be at the 'Dew-Drop Inn,' 21 William street, at ten o'clock to-night. Keep your eye peeled. Go in lemons and get squeezed. You're bound to win. This is writ for me by our sporting editor. Give the bearer a receipt.

"Yours respectfully,
"B. TELL."

"'William Tell,' hey? All right!" said Marlin.

He gave the bearer a receipt, and failing to extract anything whatever from him in the way of information as to the meaning of the note, except that "he'd better mind it or he'd be sorry, and please, *please* don't forgit to be there; that *he'd* be there and Beetle'd be there," he gave the shrewd lad a fifty cent note, and sent him towards the Stadt Theatre, whistling "the Mabel Waltz."

Marlin looked at his watch: it was near eight o'clock,

and into the doors of the Dew-Drop Inn was pouring such a crowd of men and boys of all classes and ages, that deeming there was no time to be lost if he meant to make one of the audience at all, fell into line, paid his ten cents at the door, and soon found himself in that well-known atmosphere of beer, spirits, cheese, sausage, and tobacco-smoke.

The Babel of voices all in conversation, above which soared in triumph the tones of a brass bugle, the continuous thrum of piano and bass-viol, and the sharp, shrill agony—like the neuralgia on one nerve—of the first violin, mingled with the festive sound of popping corks from bottles, or from air-guns discharged at targets in one corner of the room, and tinkling of little bells announcing bull's-eye hits.

Impatient stamping of feet for the stage performances to begin was varied with cat-calls, shrill whistling through the fingers by boys who were excruciatingly accomplished in that way, and greetings and dialogues conducted across the room. Invitations to "come here," and responses to "go"—*there;* which is not the word; nor were they always couched in the chastest or most courteous terms.

Underneath all, silently flowed that dark, and—though Dickens *did* say it—peculiarly national sea, which had its tributaries all over the room, and its sources in three-fourths of the mouths of those present. About that proportion were tobacco-chewers.

The bar and lunch-counter occupied one side of this hall, and the beer-tables, surrounded by chairs, monopolized the floor.

This brief description will serve as a type of the German halls and saloons so numerous in every city of the land.

Marlin succeeded in getting a place at a table about half-way between the door and the foot-lights of the stage. As the curtain has not yet risen, and while our puzzled and anxious friend is sipping his lager, and puffing his cigar, let us leave him for an atmosphere altogether more agreeable. . . . . .

Victor Forestal is seated in a cool, summer-arm-chair, the very seat, back and sides of which are ventilated.

It is perfectly conducive to the comfort of the occupant, and that occupant appreciates it, as he puffs a Spanish cigarita, and turns from his newspaper every now and then to sip, or finish, or replenish his glass from a second bottle of magnificent old Burgundy.

Ah! you see, though Victor is an epicure, a Sybarite, like other people he can occasionally condescend to be, shall we say it, a gourmand, a glutton, a—a—wine-bibber—a *bonne vivant* will do.

He was not very easy in his mind now, and notwithstanding the placid air with which he squinted through the wine-glass at the light to admire the color of its contents, expanded his nostrils voluptuously to inhale its aroma, and take cognizance of the manner in which it dispensed its bouquet,

> "Filling the room
> With a benison on the giver—"

or taker—and then suffered the first few drops to distil, as it were, one by one as they linger on his tongue, pass a searching and successful questioning under the palate of this artist, and then retire with royal decorum down his throat, to be followed by the rest, like inferior nobility, at a decent interval pell-mell, helter-skelter, no matter how costly their magnificence.

In this way, on occasions when greatly troubled, or particularly convivial, it was said Victor could himself entertain five or six bottles of the choicest blood of the grape, and some rare spirits beside—a great gift in certain societies, we know.

But the messenger was that moment waiting in the servants' hall who was about to withdraw him temporarily from these and all delights of his Fifth Avenue brown-stone mansion, and take him into as plebeian society as that we have just quitted.

There was a tap on the door.

"Enter!"

A richly-liveried footman did so.

"Well?"

"Curry, sir, your Millburn groom, wants to see you *immejet.* Is down-stairs, sir. Has a private note for you, sir, and asks permission to hand it to you in person."

"Send him up."

Yellow-plush was gone, with a bow which was copied from his master, only much lower, as became his station.

Another knock, and Curry entered.

It may as well be mentioned here that, like all vulgar, all upstart natures, he was tremendously impressed and humbled in the presence of wealth or grandeur. But strip the crown, sceptre and ermine from the person of King Solomon himself, and he would have no more respect or regard for that monarch, than for the fat grocer at the corner, who drives his family out in style every Sunday afternoon. Not so much, if the grocer had more money.

Majesty, stripped of its externals, would be a jest indeed with such as he.

The highest attributes of the human soul remaining, would receive from him the same scurvy, contemptuous treatment.

He did, though, respect and fear certain physical gifts such as we have seen were possessed by Victor.

"Cap'n, I brought you this here note with my own hand, sir, acause I wouldn't trust it to nobody, and acause the man as gev it to me told me not to. An' he says, says he, he looks to you to give him a hunder-dollar bill for this note, acause he knows it's wuth more'n that to you."

"Hand me the note. Who's the man?"

"There's the note, cap'n. The man as handed it to me called me as I was a passin' of his tavern 'bout two hours ago. He's the same man as you said had his ears cocked, an' you hed a mind to pull 'em fur him—ha! ha! excuse me, excuse me, cap'n. He said to me, ef I hadn't ben riled so easy when he tried to speak to me, an' ef you hadn't looked so fierce (that's what *he* said, sir), he'd a-up an' spoke before. An' he says the note 'ill tell all he dars for to tell."

Before Curry had got through this long explanation, Victor opened the note and read as follows:

"NEW YORK, *August* —, 186–.

"RESPEKIT SIR:—Go to 21 William street, to the Doo-Drop in, to nite. Bee well armed, an' hev yer friends you can count on; there'll be hot work, maybe —but you'll do. Take my advice, which is of

"A FRIEND."

Glancing up at the *ormolu* clock, Victor hastily and excitedly exclaimed:

"It is nine o'clock; come with—get well armed; no

—take the buggy, and drive around and see—you know who; we want a strong party, well 'fixed'—you understand; you come with them to No. 21 William street. You're none of you to recognize me, or stir, till I give the sign. Tell the boys there'll be lots to drink afterwards, and all the extras—I'll see to that. Begone—don't lose a minute!"

He was obeyed.

"And now," said Victor, as he slipped a handsome pair of pistols in pockets provided for them at the waistband, "I wonder if the wish *is* father to the thought, or whether I am farther from my wishes than ever. A few hours will decide—two or three of them."

He entered, shortly after, the saloon on William street.

A quick glance around the room revealed to his initiated eye the presence of "his friends."

He was sorry, however, to see two or three of the gentry who wear "door-plates on their breast" standing inside the entrance; but it couldn't be helped, and, as the curtain rose for a clog dance, or something of the kind, Victor took a chair which was handed him by a waiter—for which he paid extra, of course, as all the others were occupied—and planted it right in front of the stage.

There we leave him for the present, to look after others of our acquaintance.

CHAPTER XXII.

TEMPTING FATE.

"MR. WATT'S got back!" ran like gossip through the village.

He was an universal favorite, and as Jennie Spry first saw him from her eyry in the third story of the hotel, and ran immediately to Clotilda with the news, they were not unconscionably long in reaching every man, woman and child in Millburn.

What a comfort it is when you have anything to tell to find an appreciative listener!

John, having seen his luggage, which had received considerable accessions during his absence, safe *en route* to his bachelor quarters across the brook from Blanche's, repressed his inclination to follow it immediately and retraced his steps a short distance to call upon Dr. Daws at his residence.

The doctor's lady answered that her husband was across the way at the druggist's.

John found him there in earnest talk with Simples. In anxious expostulation. Provoked, yet calm, and at the same time half-amused by the conversation he had been holding. What was its purport did not transpire or interest John, because it was "none of his business."

A hearty shake-hands took place between the two gentlemen; for they were such, did a type of that almost extinct "*rara avis*" exist on earth.

Leaving the apothecary to swallow his prescription, the doctor led the way to his house, as Watt had intimated there were many important matters he had to confide.

"Suffer me," said the doctor, when they were seated

comfortably in his back office, the windows of which, reaching to the floor, were thrown open, revealing a very pretty flower garden with inviting gravelled walks—"Suffer me, my friend, to tell my story first, and then we will have yours."

John nodded acquiescence. The doctor then told how Redfern had called upon him, bringing a letter from Clotilda Spinner. Had imparted his own share in the mountain adventure, with such observations as he had made at the time and the inferences he had drawn since.

Had submitted Clotilda's letter, accompanying its delivery with warm commendations of the writer's zeal, sagacity, and discretion, which the doctor was rather surprised and amused to hear from that source.

Had begged him, the doctor, to see Blanche at once, and suggested, did he need any excuse for his visit—which of course he did not—solicitude for her health and his well-known friendship for the family provided one.

How he had himself then seen Blanche and had a good old-fashioned father-and-daughter talk of an hour's duration with her, which was only once, but most opportunely, not to say providentially, interrupted—of which more anon.

That he had elicited, bit by bit, as well as the dear girl could impart it, for her emotion and tears, the particulars of Victor's infamous proposition.

How he had attempted consolation, but found, to his delight and admiration, that her native good sense, strength of character, and indomitable virtuous pride had effected all and more than he could have hoped from the best arguments he could employ.

"By Jove, sir," exclaimed the doctor, enthusiastically,

"were all women like that one, I could meet them in consultation, sir, with pleasure and profit, too,—and profit, too, sir!"

He then went on to tell how he had laid before her the contrasting noble conduct of her father's true friend —"You, sir,—you, you dog,"—all that he had quietly done and suffered without any acknowledgment or gratitude to speak of, or other reward than that bestowed by an approving conscience.

"And, by George, sir," said the doctor, quite excited, "I made her cry like a baby, sir, in a style that her faithless scoundrel, I'll wager my practice, sir, never, never could have done in the world.

"Tears of rage, shame, or vexation at her own blind folly no doubt the fellow has occasioned her, but none like those, sir,—none like those.

"I would give—I would give—my snuff-box, sir, for the privilege of analyzing one of those tears!" exclaimed the doctor, with professional ardor.

"If I am not mistaken in her diagnosis, a sneaking kindness for somebody else enters more into their secretion than she is aware.

"You cannot deceive an old physician—provided he starts out on a basis of common sense, sir."

The doctor related, graphically, how, while he was talking with Blanche, Jennie Spry sent up to ask permission to see Miss Millburn, "if she please, be the time long or short, but see her she *must* in jestice."

Jennie was admitted, upon his indorsement of the request, and though, at first, greatly abashed by the good physician's presence, which she had not expected, ended by becoming so reconciled to the situation, through the kind encouragement she received, that she went down on

her two knees to Blanche, and begged her pardon for the treachery she had been "inveigled into along o' that sorcerer, that magician, that captiwatin' creetur, as 'ud charm the eyes out o' a snake's head.

"Not as I is a snake, nor yet a cameo (chameleon?) an' can change my colors an' live on air, like Simmunses."

"At this," said the doctor, "Blanche could hold out and hold in no longer, and we all laughed heartily in chorus.

"She told us about the intercepted letters, blushing with shame and crying with real penitence.

"None of them, however, were of any consequence, as nothing whatever has been heard of Rosa from the moment of her disappearance to this.—And, now, my friend, for your story."

The doctor told all this in his usual jerky, fragmentary, but humorous manner, which, as it embraced all the points, and was not circumlocutory, was very interesting to his listener in the recital.

The various moods of John Watt, evinced in his expressive face during this narration, was a study for painters, poets or players, and did exceeding credit to the warmth and honesty of his sentiments, and the ability of the speaker.

He would repeatedly grasp and press within his strong, but soft, white hand, the warm hand of the doctor, and murmur, while the tear stood in his eye, or the dark frown gathered on his brow—"my friend"—"my dear friend"—"my kind friend," and many "God bless yous," to the close, when he wrung his hands within both of his, and looked the old man in the face, as though he could have fallen on his neck and kissed him.

Considering John's weight, this would not have been

exactly a kind return for the doctor's evident deep affection for him.

Then followed John's perfectly unreserved statement of all the difficulties he had met with in New York, and the means which he had taken to surmount them.

He exhibited to his attentive and interested friend all his correspondence, and other documents, on the subject of the mines, and more recent mineral discoveries, and detailed his schemes for working them.

The doctor was amazed at the extent and variety of his practical knowledge of the subject.

Why, the man had never shown himself before in his true proportions, his delighted auditor thought.

His own acquisitions enabled him to verify much of what he now heard of a scientific nature, but he was charmed with the simple, lucid and exhaustive manner in which it was treated, with the utter artlessness of a child's repetition of an ordinary school-exercise.

What he had not heard before, the doctor recognized must be correct, from the progressive accuracy of John's statements from his rudimentary proposition, as far as he, the doctor, was qualified to follow them.

He was not prolix, only made a full and fair exhibit of the business in as few words as possible.

When he came to the subject of the payment of Father Millburn's debts, for the first time John stammered and was confused, as though he had been doing some disreputable thing.

The doctor begged pardon for interrupting him here.

"My son, I surmised something of the kind, and took the liberty of hinting the same to Blanche.

"I judged it to be simply right that she should know the treasure her father possessed in such a friend, leaving

it to herself to estimate, in subsequent meditations, his value to herself also."

This was plain speaking, and poor John, with more confusion than the confession of a petty larceny should evoke, "told his love, nor let concealment like a worm i' the bud prey on his whiskered cheek," as the slightly altered text of Shakespeare says.

"My dear boy," exclaimed the old doctor, in high glee, "I more than suspected this all along. I know febrile symptoms of all kinds, and love is full of them.

"You should speak up—but not just yet. The coast is clear, it is true, and my dear girl cares no more for the memory of that scoundrel, now that she has thoroughly learned his falsehood and villany, than if such a fellow had never existed.

"By Jove, sir, the girl deserves to be a man—if ever woman did; and was there such a thing as trying this world twice over, I believe she would be promoted to that class for good sense and good behavior. She is more worthy of the honor than half those who claim it."

This was high commendation from the doctor.

"You had better wait," he resumed, "until the capital of your English friends is developing the new wealth of the hills. I will work for you in the meantime with my old friend, and get him to give you a pecuniary interest in the works, and largely increase your salary also.

"Then—then—" hesitated the doctor, but resumed with unwonted energy, "they *must* see that it is neither an unnatural or unwarrantable proposition. The best—the very best of people are very weak and foolish sometimes," added the good man, shaking his head sadly.

"Well, my friend," again spoke the doctor, after a pause of some minutes, "anything more before you go to see them all? You must be impatient—of course you are—but, for Heaven's sake, man alive, don't look so mopy all at once! What is it now? Cheer up—you shall have Blanche yet; she is my daughter also, you know, and I have set my heart on this being a match—without any brimstone about it."

For reply, John handed him the envelope containing the cable despatch, and sat with his head inclined upon his hand, his elbow resting on the arm of his chair.

He gravely regarded the doctor as he read the telegram. When he had finished it, while his countenance was expressive of nothing in the world but inextricable confusion—consternation—he rose from his chair, drew it back a pace or two silently, bowed deeply, and was about to speak.

John rose hastily, laid his hand lightly over the doctor's lips, and spoke hurriedly these words,

"Not yet—not now—I beg, my dear friend—at the proper time! I wish no one to know it—especially them—especially *her*."

In a few minutes the doctor bowed him out of his front door on his way to Father Millburn's.

Just before he reached the outer door, John gently passed his arms around the old man's neck, and said with deep emotion,

"Ever in the future, as in the past, my best, my very best of earthly friends!" and releasing him, kissed his hand as a son might do.

Before the doctor could prevent him he was gone.

The old man exclaimed, as the tears stood in his eyes, "Bless me!"—that was all.

Ay! bless him!

"He has prepared the way," said John, as he walked slowly homeward. "This cannot long be concealed, and then, for me, it would be too late.

"Now, or never—I will tempt my fate to-night!

"My heart's idol can but refuse me, and, if she does, ah, if she does, then duty calls.

"The call of duty is the voice of God. But oh, how far more effective would be the service I could render, were Blanche my coadjutor.

"Heaven grant it! Merciful Heaven grant it!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CURTAIN RISES.

THE clog dance was over, after three or four "encores," the last of which was mingled with hisses, which the friends of the dancer among the audience emitted in order to "give him a rest."

Victor sat all this time buried in meditation, wondering "what the devil was going to happen next," and "how the thing was going to be brought about," for he had formed remotely correct conjectures as to the meaning of his presence being required there that evening.

He occupied his time smoking regalias, which he had brought with him, and drinking sundry glasses of lager, also treating his friends in a quiet way, escaping observation.

He was too wise to drink the strong liquors or smoke the cigars vended by the establishment.

At last the crowning scene of the performance drew near, as he could perceive from the impatience of the motley crowd with the length of the orchestral overture.

By the stamping of feet, hammering on tables with sticks and beer-glasses, and cries of "down in front"—"hats off in front"—"set down, won't you, old puddin'-head?" and similar cries, addressed to obnoxious parties over-eager to see more than was visible.

"Tinkle-linkle-linkle," rang the stage-bell. The stamping, etc., ceased. The orchestra changed its brazen clang for a soft fantasia, the prelude to a probable tender scene about to be enacted.

"Tinkle-linkle-linkle," the bell rang again: the gas was suddenly lowered everywhere in the house, and the curtain rolled up, revealing a wood-nymph, gracefully and gorgeously attired, sleeping on the grassy bank of a mountain rivulet.

The mechanical effects of running, foamy water glancing in the moonbeams, which poured a flood of radiance athwart the sleeping figure, was exceedingly well managed. The properties purchased doubtless at second-hand from the Black Crook or White Faun of Niblo's.

However that may be, the artificial light threw a halo about the figure which was perfectly enchanting, especially as it streamed through the wealth of golden hair, loosened and showering like Berenice's locks translated to the stars.

It was Rose—the Moss Rose—as Victor instantly perceived with a thrill of devilish triumph and delight.

He took his measures accordingly. Unperceived he leaned back in his chair, and while pretending to polish his gold eye-glass, he whispered a few words to a

rough-looking fellow, who had drawn a chair up behind him.

The wood-nymph feigned a pretty little start, yawned and wreathed her graceful arms above her head, as though waking from a light slumber, then advancing to the footlights sang:

"WILD ZOÈ'S SONG.

I.

I am Madcap Zoè,
And I know 'e!
Ah, I know 'e!
Ho! ho!
Well I know!
I'm a sprite
Of the light,
And, by night,
On the demi-semiquavers of a tune,
I ran down the gamut from the Moon;
I've more than mortal ken,
And bewitch the Sons of Men—
I am Madcap Zoè of the Glen—
Of the Glen—of the Glen—
I am Madcap Zoè of the Glen!

II.

Yes, I'm Madcap Zoè!
Do I know 'e?
Shall I show 'e?
Ho! ho!
Well I know!
I'm a sprite
Of the light,
And, at sight,
By the traces in your faces I can tell
The secrets of the prison where ye dwell;
I've more than mortal ken,
And bewitch the Sons of Men—
I am Madcap Zoè of the Glen—
Of the Glen—of the Glen—
I am Madcap Zoè of the Glen!"

While she sang the fellow to whom Victor had spoken

withdrew, and communicated, unobserved, with a half dozen others, among them Curry, who, with mingled joy and sorrow, also beheld his unhappy captive again.

These scattered themselves about the hall, taking up certain positions, no doubt designated by Victor's lieutenant.

Others left quietly, one by one, and posted themselves on the outside.

Marlin sat midway in the hall, and the many interposing figures, as well as the distance, and the pre-occupation of his thoughts prevented his observing her narrowly. The idea—which the wildest possibility had never suggested—of finding his long-lost darling in such a place, together with the total change in her appearance the bizarre-costume of the ballet had effected, also hindered his suspecting, let alone recognizing her.

His thought all along had been, and still was, that while here, or on quitting the place, some clew, perhaps remote, to his dear girl's fate, would be afforded him from some source or other which he could not conjecture.

He did not see, hidden and crowded almost against the wall, mingled with the forms of other boys and grown-up men, the weasel eyes of Grigg, who, being smaller, had been placed by Beetle in front of himself, on condition of his watching everything which took place, and reporting to him in a whisper.

Grigg's eyes were, nevertheless, constantly roving from Marlin's face to Victor's, to Curry's, to Rose's, and not a movement throughout the hall escaped him.

Beetle was equally vigilant within his line of vision.

The performance might well attract the dense crowd assembled, for the public had rarely such a treat afforded

it, and that, too, at the smallest price of admission known to such entertainments.

The lower ten thousand, with a sprinkle of the masculine upper ten, the fast ones, and the lowest strata, or the million, had hitherto had a monopoly of this "Fairy Star," which had manifestly shot into their murky atmosphere from its native higher orbit.

But it was not to continue so. Already had it been announced from the stage that this would positively be "her last appearance at the Dew-Drop Inn, owing to a lucrative engagement at a more commodious establishment, at a price of admission commensurate with her abilities."

A flaming, illustrated, vari-colored poster was at this moment in the hands of the licensed chief of the bill-sticking fraternity and his assistants, who were even then engaged—white-wash brush and paste-bucket in hand—placarding the docks and quays, Broadway, the Bowery, all the approaches to and Central Park itself, with this announcement:

THE TENTH WONDER!!

THE FOURTH GRACE!!

THE TENTH MUSE!!!!

THE LOST PLEIAD FOUND!!!!!

ATLANTIC GARDEN AND MUSIC HALL.

FOR TWO NIGHTS ONLY.

September 24th and 25th.

MADEMOISELLE ZOÈ!

THE WONDERFUL IMPROVISATORE

AND

BEAUTIFUL BLONDE;

In her chaste and charming impersonation of

MADCAP ZOÈ OF THE GLEN!

The Remarkable Performance of this elegant, graceful, talented and Lovely Young Lady needs to be actually seen to be believed.

SURPASSING ALL OTHERS

IN

BEWITCHING ATTRACTION

previously witnessed in

EUROPE OR AMERICA.

In the course of her parlor entertainment, she will single out from the audience, with truly clairvoyant perception of tastes, habits, pursuits, character and peculiarities, one after another of the spectators, and entertain all with

ASTONISHING IMPROVISATIONS,

consisting of

SONG, DANCE, PANTOMIME, ORIGINAL SOLILOQUY, AND ASSUMED DIALOGUE,

full of

ARCH MIRTH, LAUGHTER-PROVOKING PLEASANTRIES

and sudden passages of

IRRESISTIBLE PATHOS.

The whole concluding with her own wonderful and delightful creation and adaptation, entitled

MADCAP ZOÈ'S DANCE!

Orchestra Chairs, $1.50. *Dress Circle and Parquette*, $1.00. *Galleries*, 50 *cts. Decided distinction on account of Color.*"

In this place had Rose sought refuge the very evening of her arrival in the company of Victor and Curry, and here she had been ever since.

She came down the steps about the hour of "blind-man's holiday;" the last sober day-customer had departed; the first night-customer had not yet put in an appearance.

Poor, hunted child of misfortune, she had lost her way a dozen times in the labyrinth of Mulberry, Baxter, and the multitude of filthy little streets and alleys which intersect Chatham Square, and afford occasionally a glimpse into the once notorious Five Points.

The whole locality still retaining its loathsome, vice-infested tenement-house characteristics, caused even the frightened, bewildered, half-crazed girl to shrink and shiver, and turn up the broad collar of the coat she wore.

This action was partly to conceal her face in maiden modesty, although friendly twilight was beginning to veil her blushing cheek, and partly to exclude the chill, unwholesome air, seldom or never warmed or ventilated by the cheerful beams of the sun.

Unknowing, uncaring whither she went, secure from ruffian impertinence by reason of the disguise she wore, poor Rose wandered on, only solicitous to put as great and tortuous a distance between herself and her pursuers as, by running and rapid walking, she could achieve.

She reached the site of the Dew-Drop Inn at the moment the gas lamp at the entrance was lighted.

It could not have been altogether the tempting invitation extended by its illuminated inscription, although doubtless it had something to do with her decision, carried into immediate execution.

It promised shelter and seclusion; its public character

gave her the right to enter unquestioned, and she did so, making her way straight up to the further end of the lunch counter where stood a fat Dutchman, his fatter frau and his daughter, the fattest of all possible fraulеins, Dutch, Dutcher, Dutchest.

Her weary look caused mine host without further hesitation to tap a fresh keg of lager, drain a glass himself, leaving his clothes-brush of a mustache apparently lathered for shaving, and slide a cool mug of the amber-colored beverage with a professional sling along the smooth oaken counter before the presumed customer.

Mechanically, though preferring water, Rose swallowed the refreshing contents at a draught.

The landlord waited a reasonable time for his pay, but it not being forthcoming—for Rose was too bewildered and unaccustomed to the ways of such places to know what was expected of her—she was seized with consternation on beholding his fat smile disappear and a terrible ogreish frown gather on his coarse features.

He immediately opened a gruff growling bibulous tirade upon her, compounded of a choice admixture of low Dutch, provincial French, and bastard Yankee English, in which the expressions "bummer," "deadbeat," and "moosn't bilk me, by dam," occurred more than once.

Rose felt the strange sensations she had several times experienced of late coming over her again, and at once appealed to the landlady for her protection; whispering in her ear, over the counter, four little words which instantly enlisted the good wife's sympathies.

They were, "I am a woman," which she followed up in an audible voice by begging her to appease her husband's wrath; that she was unknown and friendless in

the city, the name of which she scarcely more than surmised, that she was totally unprovided with money, and begged to be sheltered there until she heard from her friends, when they should be recompensed liberally and heaven would reward them.

The host listened with open mouth to this appeal, which he drank in with more astonishment, if not satisfaction, than he ever had lager beer.

The voice was sweeter than any musical glasses he had ever heard, except those previously paid for at his bar to be filled with the liquors he dispensed, and shivered afterwards in compliment to the toast to which they had been drained.

An idea struck him, and had he not been so stout as he was the unusual occurrence might have resulted in the widowhood of his fat frau.

He grunted—a species of telegraphy which his bigger half understood—she waddled over to him and he whispered a fat whisper which her spongy ear absorbed completely; she replied and he spoke again.

The result was she advanced from behind the counter, took Rose by the hand, the fat girl took the other, and the host delivered himself like old Gambrinus to this effect:

"Young mans, my vife tells me she finds out you ish not a mans. You vill go mit Cecily und Babette, das is my vife und darter, und dey vill mak you coomfortabble. Der glass o' beer is *my* treat."

Rose thanked him and left the saloon by a side door near the bar, when she found herself in the living rooms of the family of the host.

It was well she reached this refuge when she did.

She was immediately affected in the same way she first

experienced on falling over the cliff of Dark Hollow, followed by the phenomena we have before described.

The worthy host and his family, who observed with astonishment and alarm this transformation in their mysterious guest, were at their wits' end, at first, to determine what should be done.

But Rosa, or Zoè as she again called herself—never having mentioned to her entertainers her true name—fell asleep about twelve or one o'clock, slept tranquilly during the night and awoke fresh, lively, and blooming the following morning about seven.

Their apprehension soon wore away, and the landlord stimulated by greed of "tollars" had an access of ideas in regard to "making her pay,"—"yaas, making our vortshun, my tear."

The plan he communicated to his delighted "vife und darter," and carried out in the manner we have seen.

No one inquired for the poor wanderer, for no one except Victor and Curry knew of her disguise. Her abnormal condition lasted uninterruptedly during this whole period and promised now, alas, to be confirmed—permanent—hopeless.

At the very first the paroxysms were of short duration and at frequent intervals, but in a few days (by the time of her voluntary departure from Dark Hollow with her captors) she had been visited with but one scarce lucid period, which only lasted from the moment of her arrival at New York until she sought refuge in the Dew-Drop Inn.

It was in the landlord's line, this remarkable theatrical ability she manifested.

She was young, fresh, lovely and fascinating. She sang like a syren, danced like a sylph, and was perfectly brimful of mirth and good nature.

He tried her first in a dance along with the *corps de ballet* which performed nightly at his establishment.

She behaved so decorously, was as obedient to instructions as a little child, and plead so hard to be allowed to do more, entering into the excitement and spirit of the thing, as a child would engage in a play, that landlord, orchestra-leader, stage-manager, even the waiters of the saloon, were in an ecstasy of admiration and surprise.

As to the audiences, the fame of her singing and dancing spread through all that part of the town, and filled the landlord's pockets with money at a tremendous rate.

Her name of "Madcap Zoè" was in everybody's mouth who visited or habituated such places of entertainment.

Thus it was that the other landlord came to inform Victor through Curry, by innuendo, "where he would find the gal."

Thus it was that Marlin came *pretty* near being informed in advance of Beetle's message, that it would be advisable to visit the Dew-Drop Inn, or rather to come to "our place" the next night and see "Madcap Zoè."

Nobody knew the girl's real name—she did not know it herself. Nobody saw her go, or could possibly trace her to the Dew-Drop Inn, for she was in a disguise so perfect that nothing but the delicious sound of her voice to familiar ears could betray her.

Hardly then, unless previously suspected on information obtained of the fact.

The landlord of the Dew-Drop Inn never read the papers—except the German ones—and rarely or never listened to the talk at his beer tables, even had it been on the subject—which it never was.

So the landlord had "a good thing of it," was able to dismiss his entire *ballet troupe* and *corps* of singers, etc., and alone, "Madcap Zoè of the Glen" became "the ticket," "the rage," "the furor" of that establishment, and the lower end of town.

It was impossible for her to learn a part in any written or printed play whatever, for, although an excellent, self-taught scholar in her normal state, in her abnormal one *she did not know how to read or write, and could not tell one letter or figure from another.*

But her memory of all she had previously read or learned was preternaturally quick and accurate, while her invention and originality were excited and accelerated to a degree that of itself was sufficient—had she been suspected—to prove her not altogether sane.

But there was not the slightest indication of this, in wild or distorted expression of the face, or uncouth or irregular movements or gestures.

All was natural grace, ease and sprightliness. In all respects the functions of her system were as orderly as any "*in corpore et mente sanis.*" We throw this as a *bonne bouche* to the doctors, and whether they pretend to refute and reject this idea of a dual existence, as it were, matters nothing to us, as the very case itself came every day, for months, under our careful observation, and is *true* in every important particular, as described in this history.

The landlord, as we have said, had managed to make "Madcap Zoè," who had "dropped down out of the clouds," to use her own expression, pay handsomely for all she received.

We must do him the justice to say she was not stinted in anything, and received at the hands of the entire

household the utmost kindness and attention. Babette constituted herself her maid and companion, and shared her couch nightly. Only she was restrained of her liberty, and was never permitted to stir abroad, except in company with Babette, and then thickly veiled, and otherwise rendered unrecognizable. Nor was she ever seen by any of the audiences, to their knowledge, off the stage.

When the crowds became too great for the capacity of his saloon, and other establishments began to compete for her appearance on their boards, the proprietor of the Dew-Drop Inn yielded to the temptation of an unheard-of liberal offer, and consented, as we have seen, to her engagement, for two nights only, at a neighboring music hall. In this, nor in other matters, had she the slightest direct pecuniary interest.

She knew nothing of the value of money, nor could she reckon its denominations.

Her acting was entirely *con amore*. She esteemed it a play expressly gotten up for her amusement, and only moped once during the three weeks of her stay at the Dew-Drop Inn. It was when precluded by a slight cold and hoarseness from greeting her audience for a single night.

Her idea seemed to be that these audiences were assembled at the bidding of the landlord to amuse and be amused by her. To the poor girl's bewildered intellects they were a sea of forms and faces, such as seemed present to her always now, even in her dreams, which smiled and laughed, and frowned and gibbered at her from all animate and inanimate things which surrounded her.

We return now to this eventful night at the Dew-Drop Inn.

Victor waited for the first few words only to be spoken by Rosa, when he wrote on the back of his programme with a pencil these words, for the guidance of his lieutenant, to whom he made a sign which drew him to his side again to receive them.

Grigg saw the action and duly reported to Beetle.

Beetle sent Grigg to get that paper, and he would "give him half of his snake."

The lieutenant read it, and still holding it between his finger and thumb, loosely hanging at his side, as he proceeded to carry out the order, Grigg stole up close behind him, unremarked in the crowd whose eyes were all on the stage, and effected his object by a *ruse de guerre*.

Everybody was smoking pipes or cigars, consequently matches were abundant, and were constantly struck off all over the room.

Grigg added one to the number, and when the flame was ripe for the purpose, he gently insinuated it under the lieutenant's hand, who instantly released the paper with an oath.

Grigg as instantly snatched the note, and concealed it, remarking coolly, "Beg your pardin, mister, did my sig-gar burn yer?"

The man cursed him heartily, while Grigg escaped towards Beetle as though afraid of a blow.

The lieutenant groped on the floor for the paper, getting his hands in tobacco-juice.

Such as happened to see this little private interlude laughed boisterously, and were immediately responded to by fierce cries of "Put 'em out!" from other parts of the hall, and demands of "Silence!"—and "Dry up!" directed to them in turn from other parties.

On the paper Beetle made out the following before securing it about his person for future use:

"Don't *begin* the attack. She will follow me without difficulty when in this state. If we are interrupted, I will give the sign—and *then*. "V. F."

The beautiful wood-nymph recognized Cousin Charlie as soon as she opened her eyes from this feigned slumber.

"How are you, Charlie? how de do?" was her immediate greeting to him, nodding her head merrily, and winking such a roguish little wink as set the whole house laughing heartily in anticipation.

Such is the advantage of a great reputation. So much is taken on credit, and them asses—the masses I mean—submit with complacence to such an amount of cheating in the way of light weight, adulterated articles—often bogus altogether—and such variety of swindling generally, that no doubt the rogues, both sides feel with Hudribas, that—

"—the pleasure is as great
In being cheated as to cheat."

On the other hand new beginners—young authors for instance—without such prestige, must toe the mark rigidly, must pay up to the uttermost farthing, must come down with the last grain of dust, and something over for good measure, before the same public even will say, "Pretty good—*for them*."

That's right, too, though; make them fight their way, and they'll learn how to value the position.

No money so carefully kept as that which is with difficulty earned.

Zoè continued:

"Why, Cousin Charlie, where have you been? You see, I'm here before you—your poor little deaf and

dumb boy—ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! Well, I kept my word, Charlie; but you didn't keep yours—fie! fie! Charlie, to run away and leave me so. But, boys, you see—

"'Champagne Charlie is his name,
Champagne Charlie is his name;
Always kicking up a frightful noise,
Kicking up a noise at night,
And always ready for a spree!'

You don't appear to know him—but I know him—ah! I know you—don't I, Cousin Charlie? Charlie, you haven't paid your footing, my boy—it's not like you—is it now?

"'Perhaps you fancy what I say is nothing else but chaff,
And only done, like other songs, to merely make you laugh;
To prove that I am not in jest, each man a glass of cham—
He'll stand—fizz—round—yes, that he will; and stand it like a lamb.
Won't you, Charley? For Champagne Charley is his name,'" etc.

The audience leaned over, half clambering on each other's shoulders to see who was designated, and as they beheld Victor, who—save his own party—none of them knew, and saw the appositeness of her characterization, there was a roar of laughter which shook the house.

Victor, whose self-love craved and sought popularity on all occasions—a quality which, had he been poor, or wisely brought up, would have made him eminent and useful in a country like ours—saw his opportunity.

When the uproar had subsided he rose with a beaming smile upon his handsome, flushed face, kissed the tips of his fingers to Zoè with the respectful grace of a courtier, and called out blithely in a voice to be heard all over the room,

"Good! landlord, a bottle of champagne on every table in the room, and bring the bill to me."

As he sat down thunders of applause shook the house and deafened the ears of the few who were not contributing to it.

His munificence was like himself—princely.

Zoè began again: "Ah, ha!—what did I tell you, boys? Cousin Charley, I'm proud of you.

"'Some epicures like Burgundy, Hock, Claret, and Moselle,
But Cliquot's vintage only suits this sparkling champagne swell—
The notion 'tis of every one if 'twere not for his name,
And causing so much to be drunk, they'd never make champagne.
For Champagne Charley, etc.'"

By this time the order had been partly filled, and the noise of popping corks mingled with cries of "Here's to Champagne Charley!" "Cousin Charley's health," etc., accompanied with clinking of glasses, and occasional cheering, in a measure diverted attention from the stage.

Victor, however, kept his eyes upon her every movement.

With the quick roving glance of all unsettled intellects she made a rapid survey of the congregated faces, and when silence was sufficiently restored went on with her usual remarkable performance, hitting off by quip, quirk, doggerel rhyme, and quotation from songs of the day and old-time melodies, of simple and touching pathos, the various and dissimilar characters present.

This was accompanied with mimicry that was like the transmigration of soul, it was so perfect.

She would point out two or three whom she would immediately rechristen from the repertoire of popular literature, or actual existing notables in politics, finance, editorial life, and the pulpit.

She would pretend to introduce them to each other, and carry on imaginary dialogues between them, marked

with such surprising individuality that the house was utterly amazed and aroused to a pitch of enthusiasm which was almost uncontrollable.

It had to be checked every now and then by the enforced cessation of the performance by the manager, and the interference of the police, who threatened to eject from the premises, or take in charge, such as did not maintain order.

During this exhibition Jinks, who was recognized in his old character, Beetle, Grigg, the landlord, wife, and daughter, who were gently dealt with, and even the orchestra and the stage-manager, came in for a just share of this showering mirth.

Truly

> "Great wit to madness sure is near allied,
> And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

She had just finished, and her face was glowing and radiant with apparent health and happiness, when her sparkling eyes rested for a moment on the ghastly, pallid face of a man who had advanced rigid like an animated marble statue, or like one walking in a dream, or like one risen from the dead, and stood, with dilated eyes, alongside of Victor, reaching out both arms towards her, and with white, soundless, convulsive lips essaying to speak, to call, to question, but could not—could not.

It was Marlin.

She saw and recognized *him*.

She recognized him without one particle of the mist, the maze, the hallucination which had invested the others.

Which had invested all things in a greater or less degree since that awful night on the mountain, since that awful fall over the material precipice, which, in God's

providence, saved her from a fall over a moral precipice, into a gulf of despair which—who knows—perhaps would have held her soul bound captive to all eternity.

Her face changed, till it became as white as his own. Her voice, a voice her auditors until this instant had never heard, rang out in mingled accents of terror, joy, hope, despair, alternating with the rapidity of her beating heart, his name—his *own* name—the beloved name.

She bounded over the footlights, threw both arms about his neck, which she clasped with the desperate tenacity of a drowning wretch, and swooned upon that faithful, manly heart, invoking, in the same expiring breath, her lover and her God.

"O Reason! who shall say what spells renew,
When least we look for it, thy broken clew!
Through what small vistas o'er the darkened brain,
Thy intellectual day-beam bursts again!
And how, like forts to which beleaguerers win
Unhoped-for entrance through some friend within,
One clear idea wakened in the breast
By memory's magic, lets in all the rest."

CHAPTER XXIV.

EXEUNT.

VICTOR endeavored to seize her on her way to her lover's embrace.

He might as well have essayed to intercept the auroral flash, or retain in his grasp the viewless tresses of the wind.

Instinctively her hands dashed aside all obstacles as

she would have buffeted the billows of a stormy sea, or beaten back the surging flames of a devouring fire.

His presence and *his* name were a talisman to render nugatory the utmost efforts of the powers of evil. Nothing on earth could part them now.

With baffled rage Victor found that he only retained in his grasp the gossamer scarf she had wound about her beautiful shoulders.

He rent and tore it as an exasperated bull in the arena might have gored and tossed the scarlet flag of an agile matador.

With a howl of frenzy, he sprang to his feet, and attempted to rush between them, crying out:

"She is mad—the girl is mad—seize her—somebody seize her—don't let her escape—she is mad—I tell you she is mad!"

But the swaying, turbulent, half-intoxicated crowd already enveloped the pair, and prevented all possibility of his setting the example in person.

He struck out frantically right and left repeatedly, and one after another went down headlong beneath his blows, like ten-pins before a skilful player.

Instantly throughout the crowded hall there was a crash of falling chairs and tables. Next, the suggestive sound of those articles being wrenched to pieces to furnish clubs and missiles for the mob, who were excited to bedlamite fury and delight at the prospect of a riot.

"Let 'em alone," "hands off," "it's a lie," "it isn't," "she's mad," "she isn't," "fair play," were a few of the countless conflicting cries.

Mingled with these were shouts, profanity, blasphemies, and demoniac laughter, with yells and cheers inciting to further hostilities; while, rising shrilly above

all, splitting the tortured hearing with the culminating note of pandemonium, was heard the policemen's whistle, which each one blew in emulation of his fellow.

The force distributed itself through the room by dint of dragging to the floor every human obstacle, and making temporary rostrums of the bodies, whence they harangued the crowd, flourishing their batons in one hand, and holding their revolvers in the other, prepared for firing, if unavoidable.

Beetle and Grigg climbed the pillars of a gallery, and when as many as that point of observation would hold had imitated their wise example, and it fairly began to crack with their weight—which they could feel but not hear—the boys mounted to the shoulders of those in the rear against the wall.

There they might have been seen, the little one looking over his companion's shoulder, grinning a ghastly smile, with an expression made up of curiosity, apprehension, and love of deviltry, which, on such occasions, characterize boys and young monkeys.

The hesitation of the police was soon removed.

Who fired the first shot, no one knew—no one ever does at such times; but a dozen dropping shots succeeded which had the effect of producing a moment's appalled silence, and a panic which lasted for a brief minute.

The recurrence of the fearful sounds seemed at the same time to habituate the mob to the idea of danger, and arouse its dormant wild-beast instinct and thirst for blood.

Round after round was fired by the police, who had by this received reinforcements from the nearest station, which were responded to in a noways backward manner by the "roughs" indirectly under the command of Victor's lieutenant.

The boys, like generals in a great engagement, held their positions of perfect safety, unless some stray bullet *might* chance to come that way, in which case they considered it would have to pass through a dozen other heads first, and thus weaken its force.

They kept their eyes, as well as the swaying mob would permit, upon the principal actors in this history.

Victor endeavored, with the assistance of the stage manager and the three members of the orchestra, to obtain possession of Rose.

She recovered in a moment or two from her swoon, and, as she regained consciousness,

> "Tears, floods of tears,
> Long frozen at her heart but now like rills
> Let loose in spring-time from the snowy hills,
> And gushing warm, after a sleep of frost,
> Through valleys where their flow had long been lost,"

relieved her wrung spirit; without which angel visitants she never could have borne the sudden alternation from despair and madness to reason, hope, and the heaven of bliss itself—safety in the protecting arms of her lover.

As for Marlin, the gloom and feebleness of the grave left him like the bodily garment which crumbles away from a regenerate spirit.

It was she—it was indeed she—alive and well—she, the long-lost—the presumed murdered and hidden out of sight of all, save one, the Omniscient eye.

As he felt her heart throb and flutter against his own, like a gentle land-bird whirled by the gale far away to sea, and seeking refuge from wild winds and stormy billows on his friendly bark, which some good angel had wafted across its weary way just as it was about to perish miserably, Marlin threw around her the sacred ægis of his love.

All the gods inspired him at once. Wisdom, strength, bravery, and all their higher attributes displayed themselves at once in his conduct.

For some unaccountable cause he found himself attacked by a dozen desperate assailants together.

His experience in many a foreign port of drunken brawls and bloody hand-to-hand conflicts in gin palace and ale cellar came opportunely to his assistance now.

Bidding Rose hold firmly about his neck but not impede his breathing, he snatched a chair with his left hand and floored the most gigantic of his antagonists, who went down like an ox.

It was Bill Curry.

Another administration of the same sedative deposited the lieutenant alongside of Curry.

He was about to repeat the dose upon the next patient who applied, but was anticipated by that individual's giving the chair a vigorous kick, so skilfully applied to the bottom rung that it tore it from Marlin's grasp. It was propelled ceiling-ward and lit with an audible thump or two upon the heads of a select group of combatants some twenty paces in the rear.

Marlin then with his right hand drew a pistol, which, until thus disarmed, he had forborne to exhibit.

His assailant did the same, and fired before he could bring his own to bear.

As Marlin ducked his head the bullet hurtled by, and one of the assassin's own party, who was endeavoring to cut off Marlin's retreat, fell against him and rolled over on the floor with a groan at his feet.

It was Victor who fired the shot, as both the boys, whose eyes were upon him as the one most to be dreaded, distinctly saw.

This occurrence, for a moment, congealed the participants with horror, and afforded Marlin, who had been watching for some such event, the opportunity he sought.

He caught up Rose with one arm, brandishing his ready pistol in the other, and sprang, with the irresistible force of a thunderbolt, into the midst of his assailants in the rear and gained the ranks of the augmented police force, who were preparing for another rally upon the mob.

It was at this moment the firing became quite active.

He continued his retreat towards the door and had reached the lower end of the lunch-counter, against which he was pressed by the crowd around its edge, and back against the wall, when suddenly, to his astonishment, he felt it yield to his weight, and the next moment he found himself alone, in the sturdy arms of the burly Dutch host of the Dew-Drop Inn, while Rose was similarly enfolded in the oleaginous embrace of his daughter Babette.

The secret door between them and the combatants had been again securely barred behind them, and only the smothered uproar of the continued fracas now reached their ears.

Fervently did Marlin thank Heaven for their preservation, and warmly did he return the embraces of his kind-hearted rescuers.

While they are conducted by their Teuton friends to an apartment remote from the late scene of contention, where Rosa may receive the needed administrations of the women and Marlin may narrate his story to his unlooked-for friend over a pipe and glass of grog, we will return to the fearful place they have quitted.

Men maddened with strong drink, and that of the usual bar-room description, which is a compound of

almost all known and unknown mineral and vegetable poisons, become excited by personal conflict in their midst to that degree that they inevitably yield to the infection and are converted straightway into dangerous lunatics, which no measure short of putting them *hors de combat* can restrain or subdue.

If the original cause or object of their resentment be removed, they will immediately substitute another and go at it forthwith with redoubled unreasoning fury.

Thus, when Marlin disappeared, the fact scarce seemed recognized, so brief was the cessation of the struggle.

Victor at once realized that the game had flown, and all effort at recapture for the present was vain.

He, therefore, put up his weapon and was preparing to withdraw himself and forces when a strong hand was laid upon his collar and he found himself within the iron grasp of the law.

The policeman who had seized him either was superior to bribery, which was at once attempted, or was so obtuse that he could not understand the advantage personal to himself in permitting so fine a gentleman, who had condescended to this little lark, to withdraw unmolested at its termination.

Whatever was the reason, he held on all the firmer to his prisoner.

Observing the determination of that face, the development of that form, and the dangerous gleam of that eye, he applied his whistle to his lips and was in the very act of signaling for assistance when his valuable capture drove the whistle half-way down his throat, followed by a select number of his front teeth.

By a scientifically disposed kick at the same moment, just below the belt—which was undoubtedly foul—he laid him out upon the floor as harmless and inoffensive as a railway sleeper.

The clutches of a half dozen at the least of his professional brethren were instantly laid upon the vanquisher.

Bill Curry saw this.

The rest of the party were in custody, had escaped, or were at the moment engaged in other parts of the room in little free fights among themselves or with other members of the police force, or were ransacking the bar, which had been long ago demolished, looking with haggard eyes and furred tongue for something more to drink.

Only Bill Curry noticed.

His own chances for escape were admirable, for—not with the exercise of sagacious forethought, but through drunken whimsicality—he had invested himself with the coat and cap of a policeman, and with shining star upon his breast might have walked off unquestioned.

But he saw Victor Forestal, his great model and exemplar in all things, the god of his idolatry—the man whom he loved as a brother—to whom he had truly said, "Bill Curry, who never had a brother nor never loved no man, loved *him*," he saw that man overpowered by a force which no mortal could by any possibility resist.

Six or eight surrounded him, and although he knocked them about and against each other and over each other prostrate upon the floor, they returned continually to the assault.

At last one—the very giant of the force—the boast and "brag-man" at all the stations and at head-quarters, old "No. 60" himself, whose deeds were innumerable and marvellous—this one aided by the others had grasped those steel-like wrists and was about to clasp upon them the ignominious ornaments facetiously known as the "darbies," the "bracelets," etc.,—properly, the handcuffs.

In a moment more the sharp click of the steel spring would have proclaimed the humiliation complete.

The unfortunate wretch Curry was animated by no other earthly motive than love for his friend and master —than a vague perception of the dreadful indignity that splendid gentleman must forever regard it to have been so basely manacled.

He joined the crowd of uniformed guardians of the peace who thronged about his pale and gasping master, and made his way with sweeping strokes of his brawny arms up to his side, as they held him bent backward among them, several strong coarse hands grasping each slender fair wrist of the plucky gentleman.

Curry laid one hand on the shoulder of "Old Sixty" and hailed him, only once, in a husky whisper scarcely recognizable as a human voice, "Say—ole door-plate—let that man up—d'ye hear?" The speech was unheard or unheeded.

Curry's eyes darkened for an instant with the foreshadowing of his purpose, the other hand was stealthily withdrawn from beneath the coat he wore, was lifted high above his head and swung round with such power and speed as to be momently invisible, and fell with tremendous force upon the left breast of "No. 60."

A gleam of sinister light flashed from the hand as it descended, and the policeman's days, as well as himself, were numbered.

He relaxed his grasp of Victor and fell back upon the floor, stabbed to the heart and dead—quite dead.

The door-plate had been converted into a coffin-plate, and the exploits of the pride of the police force were over forever.

The consternation which seized upon all around at

srght of this bloody deed enabled Victor to regain his feet, and secure himself from recapture, as his dispersed band immediately surrounded him, and with ready weapons awaited the next movement.

But presence of mind had forsaken the comrades of the murdered man. Probably had he been less their pride and boast, this would not have been so.

While they stooped over the prostrate form from which the life-blood gushed in torrents at every fainter beat of that heart, soon to cease its pulsations forever, Curry stood erect, with frenzy written in every lineament of his coarse features, and without the least attempt at flight, thus declaimed, like the madman the act had temporarily rendered him:

"Mr. Victor Forestal is innocent as a lamb. D'ye hear me—you? I say so, I, Bill Curry, say so! I stole the gal. *He* didn't put me up to it, or give me money to do it. Them, as says he did, lies! When I hid the gal in the cave she had her senses, an' she lost 'em arterwards, when she fell over the ravine. She *was* mad, an' she's *ben* mad, till to night. He *didn't* want me to kill her—it's a lie—it's a lie—it's a d—d lie! *I* brought her to New York myself, an' *I* was going to take her away to-night. *He* wan't—Mr. Victor Forestal wan't—'twan't *him*, 'twas *me*. And I—oh, Lord—I—I—killed that man there—now hang me—hang *me*—don't hang Mr. Forestal—don't—*don't*—hang *him!*"

All this was cried out with the rapid incoherence of a maniac. Several times, during its progress, Victor interrupted with shouts to his associates,

"D—n you, knock the fool down and drag him out of this! Why the h—ll don't some of you knock the fool down—he'll hang you all."

Curry was seized by his friends, unresisting, uncaring by whom or for what purpose, and borne out upon the street in the black midnight, in their charge, but torn and lacerated in conscience by the undying worm—remorse—remorse—remorse.

The police held undisputed possession of the bloody Dew-Drop Inn, and of the rapidly chilling and stiffening body of their famous comrade.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LOVER'S WALK.

AWAY in Millburn this same night the moon was shining serenely. Tranquillity and innocence had there taken up their abode, and their reign promised to be perpetual.

What a heavenly contrast did those silvery hills, and cool, shady valleys present to the hellish carnival of evil passions we have attempted to portray!

. . . . . .

Why will lovers of every age and condition make such ado about the selection, preparation and donning of every article of their habiliments on the eve of popping the fatal question?

On such occasions they preserve their secret with the notable sagacity and success which attends an hunted ostrich seeking safety.

John Watt was no exception. How should he be? We would esteem him less, were it so. John was a great fellow for business, as we have seen. There was a vast

deal of "go" in him—nothing whatever of the "stick" —unless in the sense of tenacity or adherence. In these qualities, his men at the mines said "he was a whole team and a dog under the waggin."

Not elegant, but expressive.

He was loyalty, as well as honor, personified. Not in its mere party acceptation, but in the catholic, universal sense of the word.

Having dined and smoked his havana, therefore, John went at once to Father Millburn, and with almost entire unreserve laid before the old man the history of his negotiations in New York.

Those matters which he withheld were personal to himself, of no present consequence to the hearer, and his motive in the concealment was mere characteristic modesty.

It would have delighted the reader of this narrative, who, if we have not failed in our recital, by this time takes a friendly interest in the fortunes of John Watt, to have seen with what feelings of mingled thankfulness to God, and gratitude to his friend, Father Millburn heard him throughout, and embraced him affectionately at the close.

He called him repeatedly "my son," "my child," "my dear, dear boy," and no actual parent could have evinced more doting pride in, and fondness for, a favorite child, than Father Millburn exhibited for John.

Then, like a lady's postscript at the tail of a long communication, came Watt's next revelation, containing the pith and marrow of all he had to say.

He told the old man of the change in his own prospects: of the death of his only brother, whereby he had been left in circumstances which justified his entertaining thoughts of marriage.

He told him of his love for Blanche. He elicited from him the corroboration of the news that the match between her and Victor was "off," "out of the question," and "utterly impossible in the future."

He assured him—which the good man well knew—that he had scrupulously and honorably refrained, to the present moment, from any avowal or betrayal of his sentiments to the dear girl herself, and should have so continued to act had not recent events altered the circumstances which imposed this painful restraint and self-denial upon him.

He begged the old man, in any event—whatever was the upshot of this affair—to permit him to be in the future, as he had been proud and happy in being for a long time in the past, his humble servant and devoted friend—"his child," "his son," as he had affectionately called him.

And, furthermore, delicately as became the subject and the speaker, he besought him, on all occasions, to regard him temporarily as his banker, and use his check-book as though it were his own.

"My dear Father Millburn," said the whole-souled fellow, "without you I might not have been alive now, to be the recipient of this recent bounty Heaven has bestowed. 'I was a stranger and naked, and an hungry,' and you received and clothed and fed me, and with whom, if not with you, should all this abundance be shared?" The old man wept tears of joy and affection, and gave thanks and glory to HIM who thus revealed to his purblind perception the godhead of humanity.

He embraced John over and over again. He contrasted the conduct of Victor from the first, who had carried on a clandestine correspondence with his daugh-

ter, into which he had deluded her by pledges, promises, warnings almost threatening in effect.

However specious the arguments and influences employed he did not wholly exonerate Blanche, who, in his opinion, should never have consented for a moment in the slightest particular to deceive her old father.

John exculpated his adored with zeal and eloquence, pleading the innocence and credulity of a girl's unsophisticated mind, the power of the affections and the serpent wisdom and subtlety of Victor Forestal, such a picture of whom he drew, that the old gentleman was astonished and alarmed, and asked him instantly why *he* had not advised and warned him and Blanche of this before.

When John explained, the old man saw additional reasons for the admiration and affection he had conceived for his young friend.

"And now, Father Millburn," said John, in conclusion —"will you help me—will you aid me in winning Blanche? Have I your consent to speak with her to-night? For, unless this heart-sickening suspense is removed, I really fear that fortune's other favors come too late, or have been dispensed in the wrong direction."

The old man pledged himself to go at once to Blanche, sound her on the subject, and do his best to bias her decision, so manifestly to the advantage and happiness of all, in his, John's favor.

"Remember, dear Father Millburn," cautioned our friend, as they were about to separate, "no undue influences, no parental pleading or authority—Blanche must take me for myself—to secure her own happiness solely or leave me alone—Ay, alone all alone," he added to himself, with a sigh.

"Cheer up," said the kind old gentleman, "cheer up, my child. One thing I can promise—she honors and esteems you, and what more, you can learn to-night. Don't forget to-night!"

"As though I could forget!" exclaimed John, with a sad smile, and departed.

All hours come to him who waits.

John waited his, but most impatiently; yet come it did at last.

With more misgivings than he had ever previously entertained on the important subject of dress, "looks," and personal appearance generally, he fumbled nervously at the latch of Father Millburn's garden gate, before he could shut it that evening after him.

About the hour ot 8 P. M., he stood in Blanche's little parlor, awaiting that young lady's appearance.

Aunt Lucy said she was well, and would be down "tereckelty," whatever that meant.

His mind was busy, in the interval, with all the past, its lights and shadows; especially the days which had elapsed since he arrived in that village, and first entered that house, a friendless and penniless stranger—a "Hinglish Hadventurer," as they called him in derision.

Well he remembered his first interview with the good old man who had been his fast friend ever since.

And the first sight, the fatal sight, never to be obliterated, of her who had, insensibly to either, enthroned herself in his heart of hearts, and from that hour ruled and directed the channel of all its affections.

He then a beggar, a pauper, an outcast, a man without country, home or friends, with insufficient clothing, hungry and ill.

He could never, never forget, while memory held her

seat, the kind interest which that splendid old gentleman had taken in the simple recital of all the story he had to tell.

How, although he needed no additional force at the works, he "took him on," supplied him, at his own expense, with the miner's kit of tools, and bade him come there and eat, until he could provide himself, or please himself better.

Could all the zeal he had displayed in such a master's, such a friend's, service, ever recompense him, or cancel the debt of gratitude then incurred?

He thought of all the gradations by which the sly urchin Cupid had grown to be a full-grown giant in his soul, and scorned every effort of his strength of will to dislodge him.

Then he thought of his interview of that very day between that same kind "owner," and his "right-hand-man and business confidant, John Watt, manager, etc., of the mines."

How willing the old man had been to receive him as a suitor for his daughter's hand, and in case of possible success, his son-in-law—his own son.

For no father could be nearer or dearer. And all this without knowing the contents of that telegram which John Watt drew from the breast of his coat, and read thoughtfully as he waited.

He had scarcely time to return it to the receptacle whence he obtained it, than Blanche's dear footstep was heard approaching, and she entered the apartment.

He advanced a step, and took her extended hand with respectful tenderness. He listened, when she had motioned him to a seat, with a show of attention, but really preoccupied thoughts, to her expression of thanks and gratitude for his services to her father and herself.

While she spoke, his heart swelled with sensations which none but those who have truly loved can appreciate or imagine.

When she had concluded, which she did in few, graceful words, he modestly disclaimed any merit in himself of those services, as they had really cost him no sacrifice, and that they were of value to her father and to her, had been throughout, and would forever be, his exceeding great reward.

"If," said John, after a moment's hesitation, "Miss Blanche, you are not apprehensive on the score of your health, and you do not deem me impertinent in making such a request, you will confer a favor upon *me*, if you will accept my escort for a short walk, under the brightest moon and the clearest sky I have seen this autumn.

"We need be but a short time absent, for I shall not be so selfish as to be unmindful of your recent ill health."

Blanche blushed sweetly, and answered with assumed gayety:

"Why, of course, Mr. Watt, and I shall be thankful for your company; a little fresh air is all I require. I have housed myself too much of late. But now that *you* have come home, I shall not do so, I promise you."

A few moments thereafter they stood by the brookside, on the mountain-path above the homestead, near the ruined old mill.

There they paused a while to enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of the scene.

On the right Bald Mountain lifted his hoary old summit above the surrounding wooded hills until the moonlight rested upon his frosty pow like a blessing, crowning him with patriarchal honors. On the left towered the

rugged, densely-wooded, beetling crags of the continuous chain, which, with the sole other distinct exception of Pimple Hill, girdled the sweet valley which lay peacefully in their embrace, sung to slumber by the subdued murmuring lullaby of a thousand brooklets, whose waters shimmered in the moonbeams like the tangled silver braids and tresses of Undines.

The old mill as it were, decrepit and superannuated, sat with its roof-tree bowed helplessly in its crazy old lap, its beams and girders bulging out through the floors and weatherboarding like sharp bones protruding through shrivelled skin.

There it seemed to brood in melancholy stupor; no longer shaking with the passion of labor, only now with palsy, as the feeble stream poured idly over the disused wheel, like maudlin tears.

But its crumbling age was sanctified and illustrated by the moonbeams which, streaming over it from the solemn sky, invested it with the shining garment of the bridegroom, and turned its tears to rapture.

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant," seemed inscribed in sacred characters above its lintel.

The rude bridge, that spanned the stream which shouted like thoughtless boyhood as it rushed headlong past, was worn to tatters by the wheels of continuous heavy wagons in by-gone days. Whole beams had rotted, piecemeal, out of it, and the splinters had dropped into the rapid current, like the mimic boats of children, and sailed away upon the tide, as the children themselves soon do upon the tide of time. The bridge could now no longer be trusted.

The old mill, with its still wheel, trickling diamond-drops; the dilapidated bridge drooping to the surface of

the brawling stream, and trembling with its impetuous shock; the confluence of two brooks above, whose united power once set the old wheel whirling day and night; the banks fresh and green, as on creation's primal morn, in the spaces between masses of many-tinted rocks, and the foaming, fretted, crystal-clear streams, glittering in the moonlight and gurgling in the shadows, as they darted in and out beneath the overhanging trees, made a delicious scene, which John and Blanche had both often sought and equally enjoyed.

Higher up the hills though was a spot which the dear fellow had mentally selected for his revelation. The footpath presently led them, by easy gradations, to this most romantic of all localities, the equal of which the humble historian of this "ower true tale" has not elsewhere seen—albeit he is something of a traveller.

It was a perfectly level plateau of about twenty acres in extent—perhaps less—which had either been cleared at some indefinite former time by parties prospecting for mineral ores, or was naturally denuded of heavy timber.

In the daytime the healthful, cheerful sunlight was thereby permitted to irradiate the spot, or, at the hour when John and Blanche arrive there, the glorious moon to saturate it with her mellow beams.

In the rear the mountain, densely wooded, towered half-way to the zenith; the gnarled roots of great trees winding about the gray rocks of cathedral proportions, while other boulders were upreared like cupolas, or pierced the sky in the semblance of spires and pinnacles.

The position was sheltered alike from torrid storm-winds, and the no less unwelcome bleak north.

To and past this spot ran a smooth, level path for the distance of several hundred yards, beneath magnificent

forest trees, whose over-arching, interlacing boughs produced a twilight shade even at summer noonday.

This was so unparalleled an attraction—so suggestive in its associations—that it obtained the name, which it bears at this moment, "The Lover's Walk."

In front of this table-land, which was heavily aromatic with the fragrance of its border of pine trees and cedars, straight as lances, and lofty like those of Lebanon, was a deep gorge or glen, the same which, much higher up, was the scene of Rose Moss's peril and adventure.

At the very foot of this gorge a strong and beautifully picturesque mountain-brook rushed with the velocity and roar of a cataract, through masses of rock and wild tangled undergrowth, down the declivity of the mountain.

From the south, rushing as impetuously towards the spectator, down the precipitous sides of an opposite mountain, plunged another foaming torrent like a runaway steed which had thrown its rider, disdaining to be crossed, and now tossed its snowy mane to the winds, and shouted its transport to the blast as though it were the sound of a bugle.

These two streams meet and mingle their waters here, continuing their mad blended race, like frightened and goaded chargers divested of all trappings and restraint at the Hippodromes of ancient Greece and Rome, during the Olympic games.

The view of this sublime conjunction of the torrents was complete through the thinner foliage at this point. While the light of the sun or moon flashed like the gleam of a scimitar upon one of these streams, the other was sure to be invested with the equally effective and impressive shadow, which might be likened to the sheath

into which the danger-threatening blade was ever harmlessly returned.

The scene presented was the perfection of the sublime and beautiful, and proved the irresistible power of contrast.

Here John and Blanche were pleased to rest, seated on a huge rock, in full view of the splendors which environed them around, above and beneath.

And here transpired what shall be detailed in another chapter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

JOHN WATT'S SECRET.

THEY both sat for a while perfectly silent recovering breath, and at the same time through eyes and ears drinking in the heavenly beauty of the scene.

It was a warm night for the season, and the breeze which reached them there, owing to the topography of the region, circled about in playful eddies, and appeared to fan them as though with angel wings, bringing to their regaled senses the delicious aroma of the resinous pines and cedars.

Not many words of comment and praise had been expended upon the enchantments of the hour and the scene, ere John adroitly conducted the conversation to the channel in which he willed it to flow.

It was more difficult navigation than even he had surmised, when he fancied himself fairly launched, and was preparing to set stu'n-sails to the wind, in fact crowd all sail.

He did not esteem it a wise or prudent example to follow that of the landsman, to nail the mariner's needle due north, to secure it from veering, and then steer right ahead in spite of wind or weather.

He was a timid mariner, though a heart of oak, and apprehended all sorts of rocks, reefs and hurl gates. He had also read of Scylla, Charybdis, the Maelstrom, etc.; but it had to be done, so he plucked up courage at the recollection of the adage, "Faint heart never won fair lady," and suddenly addressed Blanche thus:

"Miss Millburn, I should not have presumed to extend our walk to-night beyond its usual limit—the old mill—had I not reason to suppose that your father has communicated to you the substance of a conversation I had with him this morning. Dare I hope that the subject of it was not altogether unexpected or distasteful to you?"

"He did speak to me!" gasped Blanche, and hesitated, doubtful how to proceed.

"Take into consideration, I beg of you, the importance your decision must be to me, and pardon the seeming boldness of my request.

"Have you given the subject sufficient consideration to enable you yet to frame a reply?

"I should not press so urgently for your decision; but, indeed, I feel that it should not—it cannot be delayed.

"My peace of mind, my happiness are already jeoparded, are gone. Miss Blanche, dear Miss Blanche! let me hear your reply, and I pray you to be merciful.

"I have loved you all these years—so many years. I have dared to love you, without hope, without a right to

hope; without excuse or justification for the presumption until now. And now, even now, I should not—I could not have spoken, but that I feel actuated by less selfish motives than possibly even your kind, charitable heart may trust itself to ascribe to me."

"What are those motives, Mr. Watt?"

"I am sorry that you have asked me; but as hesitation would import insincerity, however painful it may be to both of us—pardon me—I am forced to explain.

"In the first place, dear lady, again I ask your forgiveness, and beg you will allow me to proceed in my own way, and to assure you that should my expressions wound your delicacy, it will be without the remotest intention on my part to do so purposely.

"I will be as guarded as the warmth of my feelings and my agitation will allow.

"I would sooner pluck this heart, which beats for you alone, out of my aching bosom, and still this tongue in death before its slightest accent should disturb the tranquillity of her who is, has been, and ever will be the only woman on earth to whom I have said as I now dare to say to you—I love you—Blanche—sweet Blanche—dear Blanche, I love you with all my heart and soul, with the devotion of a lifetime—with a love that cannot lessen but must increase through life, through death, beyond the grave, through all eternity—and I implore you—on my knees, my heart's idol, to be mine—my Blanche—my adored—my wife. For the love and hope of heaven do not reject me!"

"Mr. Watt—rise, rise, I beg you—I had no idea—I—I—am amazed. I pray you to rise. Be seated—be calm and talk with me. Endeavor to recover your self-possession."

"I will—I will—a moment, pray. You say you are surprised—and so am I.

"Were I accustomed to pride myself upon anything, it would have been upon my fancied possession of my national peculiarity, '*sang froid;*' but, dear girl, the meeting with and the knowledge of you, of your countless charms of character and mind, of heart and of soul, to which, in my estimation, are altogether secondary those of form and feature, the last defences of pride and self-control have been scattered to the winds, and I am so altogether indifferent to their loss that I glory in the circumstance.

"But you have not answered me, and my very life seems to hang upon the motion of your lips."

"You spoke of motives—other than those of self-interest. Let us return to that. Do not think me unmindful of your feelings altogether. But will you tell me, dear friend, what those motives were and are?"

"I was about to tell you when my feelings hurried me away, and I fear betrayed me into indecorous warmth. Tell me, dear lady, I have not offended you, and I will explain, as you urge the question."

"I am not angry. Proceed!"

"Your dear father, who is and has been all and more than a father to me, is aged and evidently in failing health.

"It is his desire to see your youth and innocence sheltered and protected under the guardianship of one whose highest pride and pleasure would be to love and cherish you with a devotion at the least not inferior to his own—that of a worthy and suitable partner and companion—a husband, in fact, in the noblest and truest sense of that much-abused title.

"Need I say after what I have told you that my anxiety on that score is even far greater than his—especially as I am ambitious that the choice shall fall upon me, who have been your secret, silent but fervent adorer for all these happy years heaven has permitted me to be the daily, almost perhaps unnoticed companion of your way.

"To be comforted, consoled, cheered and nerved anew by the virtuous beams of those eyes, which, though shedding upon me unregardful rays, have had the effect of strengthening and developing all that was fruitful of good in my dispirited being and imparting hopes of transmitted usefulness hereafter.

"I have been a poor exile and a prisoner, dear Blanche, in this weary world for many years, but you have been unwittingly, I knew, my Picciola, my prison-flower which solaced my captivity and now renders me unwilling to quit the cell for the freedom of the court-yard.

"You have been the vivifying sunbeam which has stolen into the dungeon of my thoughts and brought health, peace and happiness to the iron-masked inmate.

"The impassible face has been taught to smile, the immovable features have relaxed, and tears of joy and sensibility have been released from their ice-fettered sources and made to pour refreshing showers down the fevered channels they had seemingly forever deserted.

"Blanche, dear Blanche, may I hope—may I continue to hope?—What are your sentiments towards me?"

"Mr. Watt, I—"

"Call me John."

"I cannot—cannot yet—forgive me. Allow me to call you by the name to which I am accustomed, and when I have spoken you will see my reasons."

"But you will not—you—you mean not to reject me? Have pity, if it be so indeed, and suffer me to go, with the imprudent question forever unanswered!"

"Have patience. You have—you have, ever since I have known you, been too kind, too thoughtful, too devoted to our happiness and prosperity, for me, were I disposed, to cause you one unnecessary pang, or refuse you one reasonable satisfaction, but—"

"Cease, oh, cease, I implore you, Miss Millburn. I see I am lost—I am refused!"

"Once more, my dear friend, be calm, and I will explain myself as fully and clearly as my agitated feelings will permit."

"I am listening!"

"From the first, I frankly admit, I liked you. Your gratitude and devotion to my dear father, which daily ripened into unmistakable affection, like that of a son for his father, engendered esteem and admiration for your character, which your uniform courtesy, your respectful conduct towards and treatment of myself, your truly fraternal warmth, tenderness and consideration, on all occasions, could not fail to impress me, as it did others, but me, deepest of all, with corresponding sentiments of sincere and affectionate regard.

"Can you not be content to be my best friend on earth, next in those regards, and in those of our household—who view you similarly—to my, to *our* father, as though you were my brother, my only and own dear brother?"

"Alas, it is too late! It will not content me now."

"But, my friend, my more than brother—"

"Ha! may I not take hope from that expression?"

"You may—the hope I gave you, of becoming dearer

and dearer to us every day, as a true and tried son and brother should."

"Ah, Blanche, that will never satisfy the craving of my soul.

"You have grown to be a dearer self than ever was my original being before I had learned to know and prize you as I shall do forever.

"You must become mine, altogether mine—my wife—or I go forth into the world, thus twice desolated, and tenfold gloomier, should that heavenly beam be withdrawn which has cheered my pilgrimage so long.

"I could not accept a colder relation to you since I have permitted myself the mad gratification of loving you with an intensity of which shallower natures are incapable and cannot estimate.

"Never man loved woman with more or purer fervor than I love you, my heart's dearest, only earthly treasure.

"I could not abide calmly upon the threshold of such a paradise, contented with a straggling beam of that flame which should electrify my entire being.

"Deprived of one degree of its vital warmth, life could exist for me no longer, and death, speedy death, would soon succeed.

"You must give me some hope—some hope, darling, however faint, however far withdrawn its heavenly ray.

"Hold out that lamp to me. I will wait and worship and woo it with the constancy of a martyr, but withdraw it, or extend to me no more than the unsatisfying prospect which you have, and we part—we part to-night—forever—in this world and the next. For desperate, reckless lives may not mate hereafter with God's saints and sinless angels.

"Will you banish me, Blanche? Will you, my soul's

heaven-intended, heaven-directed, heaven-inspired minister, anticipate my dread sentence from the Judgment Seat above, 'Depart, accursed, into everlasting torment?'

"I *cannot*, consumed with love such as I feel hourly more and more, be satisfied with the cold relation you propose. It would indeed be 'beholding heaven, and feeling hell.'"

"What could you think of one who has so recently received and favored the attentions of another, did she now do the same by you?

"Would you, would the world not deem her fickle and of little worth, if it did not, indeed, construe such conduct less charitably?"

"No! It is the plainest conceivable thing. You were the subject of this person's attentions, and you permitted them, and were naturally not ashamed, because you believed him everything which he evidently was not.

"You were deceived in him. You thought him an angel—which was the almost universal belief—until you found out he was a devil—which had been my private impression all along.

"You loved an ideal, which you very naturally fancied you had found in this handsome, wily villain.

"He betrayed his Satanic origin, horns, hoofs and all, and you bade him '*vade retro Sathanus*—nothing more natural or inevitable.

"You did not love him—you never did love him. What is to prevent your loving me, if you think me worthy?

"I consider that the premises of your heart have never yet been occupied. There was an applicant, and the bill was taken down for a short time. If it was a disappointment, I see no reason why you should feel ashamed of the neighbors.

"You are well rid of such an applicant as the dishonest one you had. Don't be afraid to consider the case and claims of another—take me, dear Blanche, I would make a very indifferent big brother—I will make a model husband."

"You have spoken the truth—every word the sacred truth—except, of course, what you said last; I am not prepared to subscribe to that yet."

"Yet?"

"Do not infer too much from every word I may chance to utter; words have been twisted into ropes and men have been hanged with them."

"Why then may they not be twisted into true-love-knots and matrimonial nooses?"

"To you, my dear friend, it may be unnecessary for me to say what I am about to utter, but out of regard for you, and the sentiments you have done me the honor to express to-night, I will not refrain, but obey, without reserve, the dictates of my heart.

"I am satisfied now, more than ever, that I never loved Victor Forestal—"

"Heaven bless you for that word—I knew it—I knew it—and therefore I spoke!"

"Don't interrupt!"

"I beg pardon—go on!"

"I never loved him, as you say, because I 'fancied'—misled by the sophistries of his unquestionable fine mind, by his handsome person, dazzling manners, and consummate hypocrisy—I had found in him that ideal which I suppose all young maidens conjure up once in a lifetime, and which it is so fortunate for them, where they think they have met him, that some providential circumstance—which they term fate—arises to prevent their

marrying him, and being forever after thoroughly miserable.

"But, what you have not known, and I propose to tell you now, is this:

"I had doubted this love, as I fancied it, before. I had doubted Victor—often. Every doubt scouted by my heart returned to vex my reason with tenfold force and obstinacy.

"This had occurred so often that at last it aroused my perspicacity—or suspicion, as I derided it then.

"Nevertheless, whatever was the cause, whatever was the motive, whencesoever proceeding, the result was sufficient to put me somewhat on my guard, and cause me more narrowly to scrutinize the looks, words, tones and actions of my wily antagonist; for as such had I gradually come to regard him, when absent from the fascinating influence of his presence, and in cool, calm, sober reflection upon each minute particle of evidence, which he himself afforded me against him.

"My friend, your sex is no match for ours—alone."

"I am satisfied of that!" said John, dryly.

"But, strange to say, when with him, I yielded again—but in a less degree than formerly—to the extraordinary fascinations of this evil being.

"That accounts for my accompanying him upon that last drive in the pony phaeton—which I am now far from regretting.

"For my leaving it, and consenting to the hazardous walk in his company to the brow of the mountain above Dark Hollow.

"As I went along with him on that occasion my doubts, misgivings and actual fears returned and haunted me with such overpowering force as to excite in my mind a

degree of distrust and positive aversion which amounted to superstitious terror, and an hundred times I was on the point of breaking away from him, and flying down the mountain, as though to escape the presence and influence of the Arch Fiend himself.

"This I should certainly have done, had not his arm firmly restrained me, upon pretext of sustaining my steps, as though his subtle spirit had divined my intentions.

"You know the result.

"I repeat—for some time before then, his power over me had been waning, and truly as heaven is listening beyond those holy stars which look serenely down upon us as I speak, Victor Forestal is as much and more my utter aversion at this instant, and forever henceforth, as he was at one time in my mistaken estimation the incarnation of all that was proud, pure, noble, beautiful, and estimable in his sex.

"I cannot now contemplate his idea without shuddering horror, and astonishment and shame, that I should ever have been so deluded by my ignorance and his art."

Blanche ceased and hid her burning face in both hands, as she turned partly away from John Watt.

For a few moments he did not speak; he would not agitate her by a word until her indignant excitement had subsided.

At length she turned her fair face, and inquired—

"My kind friend, I have struggled hard before I could make this revelation to you, but I felt it to be due to both of us. Are you satisfied?"

"No!" exclaimed Watt, emphatically.

"No?" she interrogated.

"No!" he exclaimed, still more abruptly and determinedly—"I am *not*—far from it!"

"What more do you wish?" she asked.

He replied—"Your hand! Your father is sufficiently in possession of the secret of my life to know that I am—was born a gentleman. That I have, or will presently have, sufficient of this world's goods to maintain myself and a wife in that rank with ease. You have been made acquainted with those facts by him. They would not influence you, for I know you, dear girl, thoroughly.

"I have seen you scorn riches and their unworthy but dazzling possessor, while you suffered poverty. I have seen you comfort and care for your aged father, God bless him, with the heavenly patience and pious resignation of a ministering angel—and you are one—and I want you as a minister to me. "I am big enough for a church, am I not?"

She said, in the lowest possible tone not to be a whisper,

"Will nothing less content you?"

"Nothing!" said Watt, in a voice loud enough to be heard, had he been at the meeting of the waters below in the gorge. It certainly sounded as though his mind was made up.

"Can I not be your sister?" she asked, in the same peculiar tone.

John's voice altered and his eyes filled with tears as he lifted up his face reverently and tenderly to the "majestic canopy fretted with golden fire" which hung over them, and said in a voice which touched Blanche's sympathies to the quick—

"My only sister is in heaven now—I can never have another!"

She turned and leaned her head upon his breast; his arm encircled her waist; both his hands clasped hers; he pressed her to his throbbing heart with one long, passionate embrace and kissed her saintly lips as the tears fell unrestrainedly from her eyes which were a fountain of rapture—

"Will you say it—dear, dear Blanche—will you be mine?"

"Forever, dear John, forever!"

And again and again the bond was sealed.

As they came slowly down the lover's walk, and emerged into the moonlight hand in hand, and passed again the ruined old mill, John turned gayly to Blanche and said—

"You meant to have me at first?"

"I did!"

"Why did you not say so?"

"Oh—I don't know—I'm a woman!

"God bless you, so you are—and an angel too."

"You think so?"

"I know it!"

"Angels don't get married—there's 'no marrying or giving in marriage there.'"

"I don't know—some get married before they go there: you'll be one."

"And you another! It must be—it follows."

"I never thought of that. At all events we'll wait for our divorce till then and pray it may not come at all."

"So—" said Blanche, after a while as they drew near her father's house, where the old man was anxiously and impatiently waiting—"So I shall be Mrs. John Watt. We girls at school used often to wonder whom we should marry and what names we should bear afterwards."

"That's not so certain!" said John, dryly.

"How—what do you mean?" inquired Blanche, idly.

"Your name will be—what did you say?"

"Mrs. John Watt."

"Don't call nicknames!"

"Nicknames?"

"*My* name is John *Walter*."

"What can you mean?"

"That my name is not Watt, but *Walter—John Walter* —but come in: your father, and mine, too, now, will tell you all about it. It is a part of my secret."

And they entered Blanche's home.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BEETLE and Grigg were on hand next morning at the Dew-Drop Inn prepared to set out with Marlin and Rosa for Millburn, pursuant to the urgent advice of their kind hosts.

Rosa was temporarily provided with suitable apparel by the simple-hearted Babette, who wept a shower of big tears at parting from the companion for whom she had conceived a warm attachment.

Sundown of the third day saw the long-lost girl safely restored to the arms of poor old Uncle Jobson, who wept an ocean of briny tears at the recovery of his "flower"—"his pore orphan child, as had no ma or pa but him."

Redfern's hut was similarly made glad by the presence of Beetle and Grigg.

The snake Watchman, including Grigg's half, which was the tail and one-half of the rattles, had been sold to the boys' mutual advantage in New York to a still younger street-Arab whose parents had run away from him.

The yellow dog, who had moped and pined and whined about the house and neighborhood until he had become thinner than Uncle Jobson and the shadow of his former self, was so overjoyed at the return of his masters and play-fellows that the reaction threatened a species of hydrophobia.

That he stopped occasionally in the midst of his ridiculous antics to lap water and clear his throat for another outburst of canine music was the only circumstance that saved him from Bob's rifle. His suspicious eye was on him furtively every now and then.

But joy was not everywhere as we have seen.

The brightest skies are soon overclouded. It is heaven's mercy that they as rapidly become clear.

But the moral as well as the physical atmosphere becomes surcharged with deadly miasma, and in proportion to the aggregation of pestilent vapors is the violence of the storm which shall disperse them.

The cloud, premonitory of that tempest, was even now visible in the horizon over Dark Hollow. No larger yet than a man's hand—that typical hand which is against every man and every man's hand against his—the murderer's. Yet destined to eclipse all earthly things with its horrible shadow, and never to be lifted for good until the veil which shrouds mortality is rent asunder by the mightier hand of GOD.

Under that sign of the impending wrath of offended Deity, Victor Forestal and Curry were, like uncanny spirits, surprised by dawn, stealthily, secretly, and

moodily, by all obscure routes which avoided highways, byways, or the haunts or faces of men, seeking the congenial solitude and refuge of the Cave of Dark Hollow.

What companionship, yet what distrust and aversion, are inspired by crime! How it courts and recoils from that which seems to offer sympathy or protection! For notwithstanding the clannishness of vice, there is no safety, no security in its confederacy. There is no "honor among thieves." They may be all "in the same boat," but there is always a suspected Jonah among the crew, who must be cast overboard to allay the storm. It was so now.

Victor hated Curry. He had conceived that feeling for his devoted instrument from the moment he set eyes upon him, in the capacity of hostler, at the Spread Eagle, as he then remarked him an ignominious rival for the smiles of the saucy Jenny Spry.

It was increased to a dangerous degree by the insolent and deadly assault upon him on Flagstaff Mountain.

Yet he permitted it to burn low, and smoulder, as he used the unfortunate wretch in the manner we have seen.

During all this time wherein the venom simmered it gathered strength and consistency, and assumed its bitterest, blackest aspect.

He saw in the untutored savage the rude reflex of his own unbridled lusts and passions. He was a parody, a satire, a hideous mockery, and coarse imitation of all his own weakness, wickedness, and crime.

He had unwittingly dared to hold up before the eyes of the exquisite Sybarite and man of the world the mirror of truth, in which he could not avoid seeing at every turn, when he was present, each repulsive feature of his hidden self, grinning and nodding to him with all the

playful, affectionate recognition of his own distorted, travestied image in a glass. Curry was the Yahoo to the man Victor.

It was another Valentine and Orson business. Had Valentine not been polished, educated, and accomplished, he would have remained Orson. Had Orson enjoyed the same advantages of culture, he would have become Valentine. Had they exchanged antecedents, Victor Forestal would have been Bill Curry, the hostler, and *vice versa*. In the brotherhood of crime they were "*par nobile fratrum*."

Now that another murder had been committed, in the attempt to perpetrate a crime of equal, if not greater, turpitude—that the project had utterly and notoriously failed, rendering the resumption of future efforts to that end impossible—that the hounds of the law were on their trail, and instant concealment was a vital necessity, before future security could be thought of or provided for, Victor Forestal's hatred and aversion to Bill Curry revived with ten-fold force and fury, while was superadded to it an element new to him, and therefore all the more startling and conclusive to that mind which had all along been half made up.

That element, or sentiment rather, was fear. Fear, which, when it springs up in brave hearts, as it will sometimes in the bravest, is panic, demoralization, madness.

He had seen and heard how Curry had acted in the Dew-Drop Inn. How he had thrown down the knife, which he, Victor, had immediately secured and had with him now, and proclaimed to all his own criminality. At the same time, in his wild, drunken frenzy, essaying such a vindication of his master, as, were it repeated elsewhere —in court, for instance—would, instead of exonerating

him, have the effect of producing on all minds a conviction of Victor's complicity in, if not instigation to and responsibility for, all the wrong which had been charged, or suspected to have been committed.

Before, he had been a useful tool; now, he concluded the necessity for him had passed away.

He had served his turn, and like the other implement which he carried concealed in his bosom, was no longer not only useless and inconvenient, but might be at any moment positively dangerous. If found, identification was so easy.

And then, again, "these tools are so apt, so apt," thought Victor, regarding Curry beneath his handsome eyebrows, as he stooped over his oar, "to tell their own story; d—n them!"

As he so regarded him with that expression, which, had he seen and understood, the miserable wretch would have leaped off the boat into the waters of The Bottomless Pit, over which they were at that moment gliding with all the speed compatible with silence, nerved by fear.

Notwithstanding he could not swim a stroke; having tested so often and satisfactorily the giant strength of those disciplined muscles; he would not have hesitated a moment, for life is sweet to the weariest of mortals, and sweetest of all to him who conceives he has least reason to expect a better in the unknown world of the future.

But Curry was sunk in helpless stupor, partly attributable to drink, but more to the shuddering horror which had possessed him from the moment his comrades whisked him away in their midst, and half dragged, half bore him between them, by all sorts of circuitous routes, some of them apparently underground, until they reached the

cabin of an old dilapidated oyster-boat, which rocked on the sluggish tide of the Hudson, at the foot of Christopher street.

There Victor's emissary had found him next morning, and delivered him into his master's careful keeping, at a safe distance from town, whence they had come the rest of the distance by secretly provided conveyances to the point at which we present them now, without exchanging a word, scarcely a sign.

The craft in which they were was the same old "tub" we have before mentioned, but repaired and considerably improved at Victor's expense.

It was still a crazy old concern, and would have been long ago superseded by a better, had its present owner projected so long a stay in the vicinity.

Curry, as we have said, was paralyzed with horror of his recent deed, combined with the effect of constant potations day and night since, which appeared to produce no other effect upon him than to cause him to draw his knees closer up to his chin, as he squatted, all huddled up in the bow of the boat, and shiver visibly from head to foot, as though with an ague, while he muttered and babbled continuously but incoherently, like one insane.

Perhaps he was.

But this merciful supposition was precluded from the fact that words and phrases would occasionally issue from his hot, trembling lips, which would indicate that his mind was busy with the recent fearful scene and the horrible retrospect of a misspent life.

At length he spoke more connectedly and audibly, as though replying to some remonstrance of his awakened conscience.

"He would have it—he *would* have it, you know! I

gev him a chance. I told him 'hands off.' 'Twarn't to be expected I was goin' to stand by an' see my cap'n took. My noble cap'n as I'd die fur any day, let alone spile a door-plate, as 'ud hang me, any of 'em as could catch me—ye know they would!"

"Here, hallo!" interrupted Victor in short, sharp tones, to arouse his attention. "Get up out of that, can't you, and stop your d—d gibberish!"

"Yes, cap'n!" It was the first conscious intelligible speech the unfortunate wretch had made that day.

As he did so, he lifted his haggard face and looked out of his hollow, glassy, lack-lustre eyes, at Victor, with an expression which conveyed all the tenderness of which the rough agonized features were capable.

"Take an oar now—I'm tired!" said Victor in the same tone.

"I kin!" he answered, irrelevantly.

"Here then!" and one was released from the rowlock and flung toward him. As it rolled near enough to him for the purpose and stopped at his elbow, mechanically the poor, shivering wretch leaned upon it for support and contrived to stagger to his feet, where he rocked back and forth like a drunken man, indecisively, at the door of a tavern.

He appeared to have forgotten for what purpose he had arisen, where or who he was, for the matter of that, for his hot, thick, sensual lips were again bubbling with unintelligible sounds.

Victor's voice aroused him, as it commonly did not fail to do.

"Lay hold—lay hold, I say! Do you want to keep turning round and round here all day in the Bottomless Pit like it was Hell Gate?

"Don't you see I can't manage alone? D—n you, take the oar."

"Yes, cap'n! Lord forgive me—Lord forgive me. I'll never leave you, cap'n—never leave you—never—never—never. I'll never leave you on earth, noble cap'n—never—"

"Hold your tongue and take the oar—*there!*"

And Victor thrust the heavy instrument toward him with angry violence.

It was clearly not the intention, but Curry's equilibrium was imperfectly secured at the moment, and his unnerved condition, owing to recent events, insomnolency and indulgence to excess in all manner of strong drinks, had weakened him to that degree that he lost his balance, made one futile effort to recover it and fell backward with a huge splash into the unfathomable waters of the Bottomless Pit, which presently closed over him.

Victor's first impulse was to save him. For that purpose he seized the long rope to which was attached a massive rock, rudely contrived for an anchor. It lay in the bottom of the boat, and served the double purpose of ballast.

With impatient fingers he confusedly sought to detach it from the stone. Owing to his excitement the attempt was unsuccessful.

In that inappreciable interval, another and an uncontrollable idea had taken possession of his mind.

Rapidly coiling one or two folds of the rope about his wrist and grasping it about a foot from the jagged flinty rock, he cleared himself from the loose coils, which he threw behind him that his next movement might be unimpeded, and stood leaning over the side of the boat, with eager blood-shot eye, watching for the reappearance of the drowning man

He had not long to wait. A dark mass rose slowly to the surface just beneath him, looking more like some strange polypus than a human head, as the thick hair floated and moved with the undulation of the disturbed tide.

He might have reached out a hand now and saved him with scarce an effort.

But his purpose was changed, implacable, inexorable.

He waited until Curry's head half emerged from the surface, then concentrating all his giant strength and grim ferocity in the act, he whirled the terrible slung-shot aloft, and brought it down with a terrific crash full upon the object, which he regarded with the glare of a maniac, a lost soul, a merciless, pitiless fiend.

The sound of that blow he was never to forget—it was the stamp and seal of his perdition.

The sight of that face and the look of those stony eyes, as the head rose again a moment after, thrown back, streaked with blood, its awful rigidity half concealed by the mass of protruding brains, were never to be obliterated from his memory.

Those fixed, reproachful eyes spoke to his wicked soul as it were in the words of the murdered Cæsar when Brutus' dagger struck out his life.

Victor read their expression with the unerring accuracy of conviction.

From that moment he felt that the murdered man's last words were prophecy. That henceforth he, the murderer, was a haunted man, and his victim, poor, neglected, misguided, but faithful and true-hearted, even kind-hearted Bill Curry, his humble friend, servant, slave—would "never, never leave him—never leave him on earth."

Shudder upon shudder ran through the murderer as though he was in contact with a powerful battery.

As the black waters closed over the bloody phantom forever, he turned away his convulsive ghastly face, sick with horror, and threw the odious weapon out of his hand; it plunged into the lake and startled him so, that he would have screamed out had not his throat been dry and husky, his tongue palsied, and his voice chained, as with fetters now of ice and now of fire.

He felt like suffocation, and clutched at his throat, tearing away his collar and cravat to get the air, although it was chilly, and a gale was rising.

He was dripping with a cold perspiration which burst from every pore, and the only sound he could give utterance to was a hollow groan.

Even at this he trembled, and was afraid. But the horror of all horrors was this spot.

He must get away from here, if he burst heart and—he shuddered to *think*—brain, in the effort.

He seized one oar—the other had floated off somewhere upon the tide—and attempted, with desperate energy, to scull the clumsy craft in any direction, anywhere, provided it was away from that dreadful place where he momently expected to see the hellish caldron bubble up anew, and that hideous polypus to reappear to "shake its gory locks at him, and say he did it."

As he toiled and tugged, like a galley slave at the oar streams of icy perspiration coursed his body, and yet unquenchable fire appeared to scorch and blister his shrinking flesh, and seethe along his veins like molten lava.

His eyes blazed with unnatural lustre, and flecks of foam gathered on his parched lips.

Guided by instinct, rather than reason, he drew a silver hunting-flask from his pocket, and half drained it at a gulp of the powerful brandy it contained.

The first effect of the commission of crime upon its perpetrator is the production of a numbness, a stupor of all the faculties consequent upon the moral shock; then comes the palsy of reaction, entailed by all undue excitement, and, lastly, reflection; brooding, morose, melancholy and hysteria; breeding the undying worm—remorse.

The rapidity of their succession varies in individuals, and depends much upon the vitality of that which is denominated conscience.

Yet all feel it more or less, and the thoughtful, the intellectual, more than others.

It is the demand which they least of all can evade or escape. The obligation must be honored, it is written in the bond, and the bond is due and will be executed—"Where much is given, much will be required."

"Hell!" was the first appropriate exclamation which escaped the lips which the fiery beverage had unsealed.

"As *he* said, 'what's one man, more or less, who gets in your way?' I wonder if he will float? I've acted like a fool again. I might easily have cut the d—d rope, tied it about his legs as he sat there, and tilted him overboard without waking him up at all. D—n him, how he bled! I should have known better since that time the girl shot him. I made up my mind then not to shed his blood, but—so it is, and it can't be helped now. Ugh—Shakespeare was right—the whole lake was a sea of blood and fire—

"'The multitudinous seas incarnadine.'

I hardly expected to realize the picture this way, but we are the instruments of fate."

Thus did the miserable wretch attempt to shift the burden of his responsibility upon the Invisible.

Yet all the time one mighty dread was present with him, and pursued him everywhere.

The waters might give up their dead—the body might float, be recovered, and some unforeseen circumstance fasten the crime upon him.

The conviction that he should be eventually captured—that he could not escape—that no murderer could escape, amounted to a moral certainty in his mind. Yet, like all murderers, he sought to fly the scene and the consequences of his crime.

As he sculled away from the spot, in the direction of Dark Hollow, the boat appeared to drag as though it were grappled and clutched by the drowned man, and even the superstitious thought alarmed him, so demoralized had he become through fear, until he remembered the heavy rock suspended over the side, at the end of four or five fathom of rope.

He drew the knife with which Curry had stabbed the policeman, and cut the rope away where it was fastened to the bow.

The crazy old boat seemed to be as much relieved as its master, to get rid of the awful instrument and witness of the crime which had been enacted that day, and bounded forward now with frenzied speed beneath the powerful arm which propelled it.

Victor landed at the usual place, full of associations with the unfortunate Curry, which the murderer sought to dispel from his mind by an effort of the will; but, like busy devils, they would not down.

His first precaution, when he had disembarked, was, by the aid of fragments of rock and the knife, to enlarge and extend the leaks already in the old boat, and create others.

Then to hoist a rude sail in it, which he had brought from the cave where it was usually kept, load the boat with every available fragment of rock, turn the prow, and set the sail fair for the deepest part of the lake in that vicinity, and shove her with might and main in that direction, running some distance into the water, despite his clothing, for that purpose.

The result was as had been calculated.

The old craft had not lumbered along more than a quarter of a mile, when she suddenly careened to one side, gave a lift and a lurch, and went down headlong with a plunge.

As the water became again tranquil over the tip of her rude mast, Victor muttered to himself, "that may explain, should they ever find *him!*"

He entered the cave, and made his preparations to leave it forever.

Such valuables as did not hinder from their bulk he secured about his person; the remaining articles he broke up, tore and otherwise destroyed, and buried the fragments under the earth of the inner cave, which had originally been appropriated to the occupancy of poor Curry.

Then he quitted the place, closing the entrance by a huge rock, and further concealing it beneath a pile of withered brush and rubbish.

With the intention now of making his way back to New York by as secret routes as he had left it, with a view of quitting the country, as soon as he could arrange for the sale of stocks. etc.. in which was invested the

greater part of his immense wealth, he struck off across the hills in the direction of Woodford.

The changes he had effected in his appearance and costume before leaving New York on this unfortunate journey—now become a flight indeed—would have sufficiently prevented recognition, had he not further disguised himself during the progress of his operations in the cave.

His original purpose had been to conceal himself, along with Curry, in and about the vicinity of Dark Hollow. But the murder—which, although a foregone conclusion, he had not the moment before its commission definitely settled upon the time, place or manner—changed all his plans, and induced deeper reflection.

He wisely calculated that the existence of the cave was well known to Rosa Moss, and would likely, if it had not already been, soon be communicated to others; of course to Marlin, old Jobson and John Watt—and here he anathematized the latter as usual.

The bitterest, unsatisfied hatred of his cruel heart appeared now to be reserved for Blanche's lover, whom the sacrilegious wretch actually had the audacity to pray the Almighty would direct to cross his path once—only once again. The appetite for human blood, like the indulgence of the taste for intoxicating liquors, appears to "grow by what it feeds upon." "One glass calls for more," is an adage among the disciples of Bacchus.

This tigerish propensity extends to more things than some are aware, but especially is it manifest in the children of Cain who have once lapped blood.

Thus Victor, although he had recovered his self-possession—or apparently so—preserved nothing more of the agitated exterior of the morning, or signs of excite-

ment than a certain desperation of manner, betrayed in the resolute frown of the handsome, haughty brow, such as Satan might wear among his peers, firm-set jaw, clenched teeth and compressed lips, while a deadly pallor usurped his cheek.

His stride, too, was rapid, and every movement and glance menacing, though suppressed, indicating that the slightest cause would loose his passions, and precipitate his pent wrath as avalanches crash from Alpine heights.

He was more than beautiful now: despair had made him sublime also.

In this mood he thought next of Grub, and would have sought him in the village, but his remaining chances of escape were too slender to admit of throwing one away. His arrest might be attempted there, and although he feared them not, he had no desire to further rouse the country-side, which he knew to be already on the alert for his and Curry's capture.

As he strode along and thought thus, as it often happens, the very object of his thoughts appeared—the man himself—Grub.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BO'SEN'S WHISTLE.

JOHN WATT'S quotation of the old saying, that "It never rains but it pours," was about to receive additional corroboration, this day, in Millburn.

Dr. Daws had paid a preliminary visit to Father Millburn and Blanche, imparting the glad tidings of

Rose's return, in perfect health and safety, to the heart and home of Uncle Jobson.

They were further delighted with the information that she herself, accompanied by her uncle and probable future husband, would return with him in the course of an hour or two to obtain Father Millburn's blessing, and see Blanche, whom she was, as she said, "dying to meet again."

Both assured him they were equally impatient to behold the fair Rose which had been so rudely stolen from their garden.

Blanche's father, in exchange for the good news the doctor brought them, confided those of John Watt's engagement to his daughter, causing Blanche many bright blushes and further signs of secret happiness, while our friend, the quondam Cornish miner, who was already there and sat beside her, appeared equally beside himself, with pride and satisfaction, at the result.

Good news, as well as ill news, travel fast—necessarily so do those who bear them.

In less time than the kind doctor had mentioned he was back in Father Millburn's upper room, which overlooked Bald Mountain, with the blooming Rose by the hand, whom he led, speechless with happiness, more fresh and beautiful than ever, and consigned her to the embraces of Blanche and her venerable father.

Marlin and Uncle Jobson were below in the parlor, where John had gone to entertain them.

When the raptures of the fair friends had subsided from the height of their first transports, and the patriarch of the household had folded Rose to his bosom, who sank upon her knees and received his blessing, which the old man gave her with streaming eyes and touching

pathos, giving Heaven the praise, they relapsed into a conversation of perhaps greater interest than any which has preceded it in this history.

The old man occupied his arm-chair in its usual place near the window.

Blanche and Rose sat together on the lounge, part of which John had just occupied. Their hands were clasped together, or only loosed to smooth and fondle each the hand of the other, while Rose detailed the little she remembered of her startling experiences since they were there together.

Dr. Daws sat opposite so as to take in all the group, and occupied himself, while he looked and listened, in taking off, polishing, and putting on his elegant gold spectacles, and taking vigorous and repeated huge pinches of snuff.

The subject of paramount interest exhausted, Father Millburn broached that which presented itself as next in importance.

He cleared his throat, as old men will, and with a final, vigorous "hem!" thus addressed Rose:

"My dear, they tell me that you are about to be married also. May I ask to whom? Who is this Marlin?"

Rose crimsoned, and Dr. Daws hastened to her relief, by saying:

"My friend, the marriage altogether depends upon your consent and approval."

"Yes, sir," said Rose, "not without; we couldn't think of it—and Blanche's consent, too."

"Mine?" said Blanche: "how can that be?"

"Why, you see, Father Millburn, the bridegroom is a particular friend—a sort of relation—in fact, a very near

and dear relation of the family—of your family," hesitated the doctor.

"Of ours?" queried Blanche and her father, simultaneously.

"I see," added the doctor, confusedly, "we shall never be able to get along with this business without your uncle, my dear," turning to Rose. "Father Millburn had better let him come up; he is in the parlor."

"Will you touch the bell, my child?" said the old man to Blanche.

"I will step down for him, if you will permit me," quoth the doctor, rising.

"Certainly," replied the old man, with a puzzled expression.

"And my young friend, Watt, shall I call him?"

"Ay, all of them—why not?" was the old man's answer.

"No, no, not at present; let Marlin remain there—we will have him up here time enough," said the doctor, hastily.

"As you please, as you please!" and Blanche's father looked more and more puzzled.

In a few minutes the doctor entered, preceding Uncle Jobson, and followed by John Watt. The whole party looked very mysterious, and the possession of a secret did not appear to make either of them at all uncomfortable. Quite the contrary.

As for Jobson, he was happy as a clam at high tide. The color which had evidently gone out of his cheek since we saw him, previous to the abduction, had just as evidently gone into his nose, which now fairly rivalled Bob Redfern's.

"My old friend,"—everybody about his own age, or a

few years younger, was "old" with Father Millburn, except himself; the young, such as Watt, Blanche, Rose and the rest, were "children," "mere children," as he was accustomed to call them—an infallible sign of conscious senility.

"My old friend, I am glad to see you about again. You have had a great deal of trouble. How do you find yourself now?"

"Thank'ee, admiral, on'y tol'able. It don't signify much how a old hulk like me weathers the gale. Sence them pirates is cut out, an' we've recaptured the Moss Rose—bless her, and darn thar riggin'—excuse me, admiral and darter—why, I'm gettin' peart agin, thank'ee, an' able to bolt my vittles an' take my allowance o' grog pooty comfor'ble. My pipe tastes nat'ral like once more, and all's fair agin aloft and alow."

"We have called you up, old friend, to explain who this bridegroom is, who can't be married without my blessing. Surely, if he has your consent and your blessing, that should be enough for him; few lovers are so particular, or patient either, I believe, or used to be—used to be."

"Well, you see how 'tis, admiral. My shipmet an' me (that's him a waitin' below in the for'ard cabin), we agreed as how this here match with my darter, leastways my niece, thar, couldn't be nohow without your say so. He 'greed to that willin' enough, an' no wonder, seein' as how he's suffered so much long o' his own father castin' him 'way at sea, as 'twere, for goin' contrairy to his wishes; which, it 'pears to me, is the nater o' young folks to do more or less, an' the nature o' old folks not to have no more sense than to git riled at what nobody can't help, seein' as how it allers was an' will be so, an'—"

"His father cast him off, you say?" interrupted the old gentleman. "Poor boy, poor boy! And he turned out well notwithstanding, after all? Tell me, tell me about him. You have no idea how you interest me. His father cast him off, too?"

"In course he did. Fathers hed no more sense or feelin' then than they has now. He turned him off without a shillin', or a change o' clo'es, or a loaf o' bread, an' all when he was but a pore little youngster, not more'n sixteen or so, green as a goslin', an' knowin' no more 'bout the big, round world than we does of the moon.

"'Twas jest afore the war broke' out, an' the youngster, ye see, had read noosepapers, an' heard speeches, an' talkin', as satisfied him, an' he'd made his mind up the North was wrong, and the South was right.

"Lord love ye, he didn't know no better; he jest took one side o' the question an' studied it out, an' in course he couldn't an' wouldn't see the other side. That's the way it allers is.

"Well, you see, his father tuck the other side, acause he'd lived longer an' knowed more, I s'pose, leastways that's what *he* said; so the ole man, he got his feelin's worked up, an' his cold blood got hot ag'in, an' got in his head, which ain't good for no man ole or young, an' the upshot was he got so all fired patriotick, he did, that he driv his only son, as noble a young feller as ever handled a marlinspike or swung a cutlass, or stepped a quarter-deck of a man o' war, out into the wide world, without kith or kin, or compass, or chart, or shot in the locker, to drift and drive awreck on the fust lee-shore, or strike on a reef or a sunk-rock, or mebbe be run down by icebergs, or, wuss nor that, by pirate crafts as is allers cruisin' round in all waters."

"He was an only son, you say—poor, poor boy—but let us hear how he fared."

"Hard fare enough, an' plenty o' trouble, if that's what you means, admiral. But the youngster had good stuff in him, an' though he jined the rebels—as we was all so hot agin them, an' some of us is now, 'specially them as made most outer the war, an' lost nothing—an' fit, an' bled, an' almost died he did, as I kin testify; for I seed him much o' the time, as I hed my eyes on him for reasons, an' I wanted to convart him to my way o' thinking', but 'twarn't no use.

"All the time he was jist as steady as a good sailor needs to be, an' was the soul o' truth an' bravery, an' a better hand to reef a fo'-to'-gallan'-sail I never seed in my born days. An' then he was the life an' soul of the crew wherever he was, jest as chock-full o' songs, an' jokes, and yarns, and dances, and sitch, admiral, as you be of Bible and hymns—Lord love ye."

"You were taken prisoner, Jobson, and fell into his hands—how did he treat you?" inquired the doctor.

"How did he treat me, doctor? Why jest like how you treat your pore patients when they is sick. Al'ys a sending or a bringing of 'em tid-bits an' kickshaws of one sort or 'nother. So *he*—that boy—did to me.

"On'y he hed to do it on the sly; an' many's the time mebbe he tuk 'em away from hisself to give 'em to me, an' ef he'd got caught they'd a shot him or strung him up sartin, as quick as we would sitch on our side. For there was lots o' hard-hearted ones on both sides a watchin' all ther time for chances to prove their patriotism."

"Admiral and gents"—burst out the old salt, warming up—"I've seen so much patriotism I've nigh onto

got sick o' the word—though I sticks by the idee yit—that's good—thar's no movin' o' that site.

"Well, it was lucky for him too, in a manner ye may say, that he treated me so clever, for turn about's fair play. It warn't long 'fore our side took them prisoners, releasin' us.

"Then I was put guard over him—which didn't hurt him much, you bet.

"I did everything I could in course to make his time easy, jest as he had done mine. Though neither of us come a mite short of our true duty to our service either.

"Lord love ye, gentlemen, we soldiers and sailors that was in the fight didn't feel towards each other like some o' them politicianers talk—not a bit of it.

"We jest looked at it as a matter of dooty and opinion, an' each side tried to do the best by his own. There ain't nothin' mean or sneakin' 'bout a rale good soldier or sailor, take my word fur it.

"Ole Jobson's seed the whole show, and didn't come out nuther till they pulled the canvas down. He knows all about it, I bet you!"

"But this young man's father—is he living—have they met since—how do they feel towards each other, now?" asked Father Millburn, with deep interest.

"The old man's alive—I take it—he looks alive!" said Jobson, sententiously; "but it's hard to tell how he feels towards the young 'un. I think he doesn't know the boy's spared.

"There was so many actions an' capters an' casualties an' sitch, an' the reports was so mixed up, an' contradictory like, that I think the old man believes the boy's lost, perished, drownded, or shot, or hung, mebbe, long ago. He b'lieves he's dead—I—I—know that.

"As for the young 'un, it would do your ole heart good, admiral, to hear that 'ere boy go on 'bout his father. His father this, an' his father that, an' nothin's too good to say 'bout him.

"He makes all manner of 'xcuses for the ole man when they make him talk 'bout his casting of him off so, but twists round to talkin' 'bout the times afore then, when he was a leetle, leetle chap, home with his sister—"

"His sister—had he a sister?" inquired Blanche.

"'Deed had he, Miss, as pooty an' sweet a young lady as ever I laid my two eyes on—not 'ceptin' my sunflower there—my Rose I mean."

"Is she living?" eagerly asked Blanche again.

"Is she living? In course she is!" echoed Jobson.

"They should be informed!" said Father Millburn, decisively. "They should be reconciled. Doctor, oblige me, and take this matter in hand. My advice would be that nothing should be done in the matter of this marriage until the family of this young man is consulted, at least acquainted with the fact that he is still alive."

"Well, you see, admiral, that depends—"

"Depends? Depends? How, I should like to know?" demanded Father Millburn, quite irate.

"Well, admiral, he's setch a stout ole gentleman. He might object to the match out o' spite. He might be disapinted the young feller didn't go all to the bad as he said he would, but kept a stout heart like his daddy's own child, an' is jest as good a Christian this day, at bottom, as e'er a chaplain as ever raised a hymn or preached a sarmint."

"Nonsense—nonsense! the father can't be such an old fool, such a brute! If he is—and does not know

how to appreciate such a noble lad as you describe—he deserves to lose him, and perish miserably in his uncomforted old age! But I insist upon it's being tried!

"Don't you, doctor? My good friend, you are always right in these matters. What do you think? I should like to see this poor boy, and speak a word of comfort to him. It will give me a peculiar happiness, of which you would not deprive me could you know. Call him up—may I not see him?

"I thought it—I hoped it would have been otherwise once; but as Rose, and the rest of you, are so well satisfied; what I have heard of this excellent, but misguided young man, has given so strong a hold upon my sympathies—my affection even—that I am quite prepared to forgive him having won the affections of my little Rose, and will grant my consent as far as it goes, and bless them with all my heart. Let him come up."

"But, my good friend," said Dr. Daws, leaning far forward and taking the hand of Father Millburn in one of his, while he beckoned to Blanche, who left the lounge and stood by his side. Slyly and undetected he felt the pulse of each as he proceeded: "my good friend, you spoke of informing the relatives of this young man, Marlin, of his safety. How do you know but the shock of such a sudden disclosure might be dangerous or fatal to them? For instance, how could *you*, at your time of life, support such a piece of news?"

"Ah, doctor!" said the old man, sadly, "it is only sorrow I could not support now. Joy acts upon my old frame like a galvanic battery; it imparts new life and entails no injurious reaction."

"But, Blanche, do you think Marlin's sister could receive such sudden news without injury?"

"La, doctor!" replied Blanche, gayly, "remember what Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, says:

—"'tender maids are tough.'"

"Very well, very well; I must try to manage it the best I can; but now he had better be called in, and get Father Millburn's blessing which he seems to desire and we can attend to the rest afterwards."

"If you please, admiral, an' ladies an' gentlemen all, if there is no objectin' I should like to *pipe* him up!"

"Pipe him up!—what do you mean?" inquired Blanche, amused.

"Why, lady-bird, we has this here," displaying a squab, round piece of ivory, slung about his neck by a bit of tarred twine. "We call's this the 'Bo'sen's whistle,' an' we pipes the hands to quarters, to hammock, to watch, to grog, to—to everything they does in common aboard ship.

"Marlin is a old sailor like me, an' we all understands it like talkin'. Ef I blows this—*this* a-way"—suiting the action to the word, which caused all in the room to stop their ears, which rang for a while with the shrill sound—"that means all hands on deck! you'll see him mighty soon now, ef he's alive sure enough."

The excitement was such and so general that no one could remain seated. All stood, while Blanche and Rosa clung together for support.

Every eye was eagerly fixed upon the door, towards which, by the uncarpeted stairs, light, rapid steps were heard approaching.

The next instant the door was opened nervously and swung clear back on its hinges. A lithe, active figure darted through the midst of the group, grasped and retained Blanche's trembling fingers, and knelt at the feet

of Father Millburn, murmuring, as the tears ran streaming down his delicate but flushed cheek—"Dear, dear sister! Father—forgive me—forgive me!"

It was Joe Millburn.

There was not a dry eye in the apartment as "his father saw him and had compassion, and fell on his neck and kissed him," then lifted up his hands and praised GOD, saying—while tears of heavenly rapture coursed his luminous face—

"For this, my son, was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found." And, turning on Blanche an ineffable look, such as only the father in the divine parable could have bestowed, he added:

"For this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

"It was meet that they should be glad"—"and there was none to be angry or envious."

"That they should bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and kill the fatted calf, and eat and be merry."

"So that all who came and drew nigh to the house heard music and dancing."

. . . . . .

The betrothal of the faithful lovers was joyously ratified and sanctioned by the consent and blessing of the two old men, the dearest remaining object of whose lives seemed therein accomplished.

Unobserved—when the mirth and tempest of congratulations were at their height, the noise of which extended even to the servants' quarters and brought up to the doorway of the room old Mammy and her grandchild, Aunt Lucy—John Watt, the selfish dog, drew Blanche gently away, and the two stole out for a short stroll up the

mountain path, that they might ponder together this new tidal-wave of happiness, amid the pensive beauty of their favorite haunt, "The Lover's Walk."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FIEND IN PARADISE.

LET us now relate, in as few words as possible, what was transpiring a few hours before on the other side of the mountain.

We left Victor Forestal at the moment in which he recognized Grub, the grave-digger, approaching him on the path he was then pursuing.

As that worthy drew nearer and nearer, his wretched master derived something of a sense of companionship and refuge from his desperate thoughts, simply from the circumstance that the fellow was beguiling the lonely way with a rude chant, in as lugubrious a strain as befitted the nature of his avocations.

Still, it was singing, and it was a living human being —such as they were—and Victor endeavored to shake off the black pall of superstitious fancy which began to invest all things now in his imagination.

The strongest effort of his shattered will was now, however, inadequate to success.

Could he have heard the subject which Grub was rendering with such professional relish, he would scarcely have been comforted much by the words, whatever the harmony might have effected. They were:

"A handful of dust in a coffin laid,
In a coffin under the daisies," etc.

Poor creature, daisies appeared with no other suggestiveness to his sepulchral fancy.

He had adopted long ago the definition, that "an idea was a worm in the brain."

In a moment more he found himself confronted by the haughty form, pale face, menacing brow and glittering eyes of the cap'n, as he knew him, taking his cue from Curry.

He refrained, in the midst of his refrain; took off his battered old hat and stood in a mingled attitude of alarm and obsequiousness, hesitating whether to wait to be addressed, or run away as fast as his shrunken, trembling limbs would carry him.

A moment's reflection convinced him of the hopelessness of escape.

"Any news?" demanded Victor, in a voice so harsh, hoarse and changed, that it frightened the miserable object, and half renewed his purposes of flight.

"Do you hear, d—n you?" had to be repeated, before the shivering wretch could muster the courage to reply:

"No—no—no, sir. But here's a letter for you, sir. I was goin' to look for you to give it to you!"

It was snatched from his hand, torn open, and its contents partly devoured before the stammering messenger had finished.

The words were not many—but important.

As Victor read by the fiery-glowing sunset sky he ground his teeth with a violence that threatened to reduce them to powder, and the same old night dew of cold perspiration stood in great drops on his clammy brow.

His eyes appeared to absolutely start from their spheres, such was the terrific violence of the excitement repressed as he read these lines:

"OFFICE, WALL STREET, NEW YORK.

"VICTOR:—We are ruined—both of us—I have involved you along with myself.

"I did everything for the best, but the cursed luck was against us.

"I shall not survive the event. I will blow out my brains before this reaches you.

"I cannot bid you do the same, but advise your leaving the country secretly without delay.

"It was all this d—d Administration. Farewell—forgive me if you can. Your unhappy father,

"C. C. FORESTAL."

"VICTOR FORESTAL, ESQ.,
"MILLBURN P. O."

He crumpled the note savagely and thrust it deep in a side pocket, without speaking a word or emitting a sound save the horrible grating of his clenched teeth, turned suddenly about face and went back the path he had come for some distance in the same appalling silence.

Grubb, as far as he could see him, observed that he staggered like a drunken man, moodily looking down for the most part. But occasionally he threw his head back upon his shoulders almost, and extending his arms high above him, spread out his fingers like the talons of a vulture and seemed to clutch at some invisible object and strangle it in imagination.

As soon as he lost sight of him, Grubb turned and ran all the way back to the village without stopping a moment until he stood at Todd's bar and called for about "three fingers o' whiskey straight."

Victor wandered, he knew not where. His clothes were torn and muddied by frequent violent and danger-

ous falls from which he had not the even animal instinct to guard or protect himself, nor did the utmost violence of concussion to which they subjected him appear to have the slightest effect upon his consciousness.

On, on, on he plunged madly, blindly, desperately, not knowing, not caring whither—even if the next step were down a precipice into the lake of which he could not avoid catching an occasional though unremarked glimpse through the wild forest and tangled thicket or between immense rocky boulders he would have felt a savage joy in seeing close around him or topple and fall and bury him —aye, in perdition, whither he fancied he was hastening.

At last he struck a path, and, although he did not observe or care that it was level and of easy ascent, its profound shadow soothed him and he rushed along less wildly for a moment but equally indifferent to all things except the dull benumbing sense of the last calamity which had befallen him.

Suddenly the sound of voices struck upon his preternaturally excited hearing, and he stopped instantly and listened as he would not have done to the roar of approaching Niagara.

In a moment he recognized the voices. Ah, it appeared hell had given them both to his vengeance at once before it claimed its own.

John Watt and Blanche Millburn—John Watt and Blanche Millburn both together—both together!

The wretch dropped on his knees and thanked the Powers of Darkness with mock and blasphemous parody of prayer.

He was far enough away at the time not to be heard or seen by the lovers. As he resumed the position to which by that act he had forfeited all right, he drew the

long gleaming knife from his bosom which he had scarce thought of until now, with which Curry had done the deed we have described, and felt its keen edge and tested the temper of the weapon.

Except that its handle was stained and blade here and there rusted, with that peculiar globule the microscope infallibly detects as human blood, the dreadful implement was none the worse for the cruel purpose, to which it had since been diverted, than it was when Curry had prepared it for the assassination of him who held it now.

Did no relenting cross the mind of Victor as he glared upon his victims, seated hand in hand, unconscious of danger, upon the same mossy rock they had occupied during that sweet confession and interchange of plighted faith, which had already evoked this fearful vengeance contemplated by jealous rivalry?

The tense, frothed, and bleeding lips, bit through and through with insane rage, answer the question without a word.

The bloodshot, straining eyeballs, riveted in deadly hate upon them as they sat there in blissful contemplation of the heaven which was, and was to last forever, would have carried instant death to both, in their sinister gleam, could the fiendish spirit which directed have imparted to them the fatal properties of electricity.

If thoughts and wishes could kill, he had already slain them, where they sat conversing, in all the various moods of two happy lovers, very soon to be made one forever more.

As much as it was proper and necessary, in his opinion, she and her father should know of him and his antecedents John Watt had freely explained to both, the rest he had written out in full, and the whole was

attested by documents. These, which were beyond a question of a doubt authentic and satisfactory, he had deposited in the hands of Dr. Daws, who had satisfied Father Millburn on all points that the match was desirable for Blanche, and certain to secure her happiness.

Certain secrets, which he professed to have, he begged to retain until the marriage, for purposes which he would then explain.

This was all agreed to, and the wedding-day had been fixed to take place, after the Christmas holidays, early in the approaching new year.

Upon these matters the two were now, sometimes earnestly, sometimes playfully, always tenderly, conversing.

And this was the paradise which the fiend had entered to destroy.

John had told her all about Cornwall, whither they were to go during their wedding-tour, and where his property lay, which he described modestly enough.

He had told her all about the tin, copper, and lead mines of his native place, and convinced her she had never yet seen mines, miners, nor mining.

Of his intention to send over a full force of the best workmen, from Cornwall, to develop the mineral wealth of her father's hills, not one penny of which, as he did not need it now, would he consent to receive himself; but that Joe and Rose should profit by it, and Bob Redfern too, if he had any influence.

His talk, full of enthusiasm, was of old Cornwall, as he remembered it, and of the Scilly Islands, of Goon Laz, and the Pink Mine, of tonnage, strata, fissures, and lodes, of sampling copper ores, and specific gravities of minerals.

Of assaying and smelting in Corun—technical terms —which made Blanche laugh, at the curious sing-song tones, which he imitated perfectly, for he spoke the language like a native, as he was, though of the higher orders, who were free from provincial tone or accent.

He described the town of Redruth, Poulton Bridge, Launceston Castle—the latter minutely.

Clawance and St. Michael's Mount, his own favorite estates.

Trelowarren, Karnbré, Trewithen, Nauswyden, and the manors and castles of Trematon, Tintagel, Restormel, Menabilly, Arundell, and Pendennis.

Of the rivers Tamer and Lyner, with many towns and villages, with which he seemed wonderfully familiar, and was never at all tedious, so much in so little was so pleasantly conveyed.

But the charm of all his narrative was his description of the parish church of Crowan, in the county of Cornwall, in the chancel of which his first ancestor, of his name, too, was married to Blanche Whittington—just think of that, *John Walter* married to *Blanche* in the chancel of Crowan Church, in Cornwall, in the year 1400—four hundred and seventy odd years ago! And there, too, would they be remarried, after the ceremony quietly here at home.

There, he told her, she could see the monuments of all of his race since, all of whom had been married, and he hoped would, at last, be buried in the dear old parish church.

Blanche laughed and wept, and asked questions, and listened earnestly, through all this happy outpouring of John's honest heart, and all the time the fiend heard, and

glared, and watched his opportunity, with the murder-crusted weapon in his assassin gripe.

And equally unknown to the lovers or the jealous rival, and equally unsuspicious of the proximity of any of them, at the same time slowly approaching the spot, which they had to pass on their return to the village, where they hoped to arrive before nightfall, were three more or less important characters in this history.

They were Redfern, loitering far in the rear, and Beetle and Grigg, returning from an excursion; the last had outstripped our bachelor friend some hundreds of yards.

But Reynard was close up with them, and fatter than ever since the boy's return.

As the boys came along the dark, moss-lined path, with noiseless tread, and quite silent from fatigue, at the same moment both perceived Victor, clutching the murderous knife, and about to spring upon the lovers over the rock at their back, which had favored his approach.

The sun had gone down, but the western sky behind him was red with wrath, and seemed to rage with the same awful thirst and passion which consumed the cruel heart of Victor.

To the lovers it imaged only serenity and repose, and, like all things in the light of their love, appeared *couleur de rose.*

Beetle, at this discovery, seized the dog by the collar and checked his surly growl, preventing him also from betraying their vicinity, as he would have done by advancing, and as perhaps might have been best.

Doubtless the assassin, discovered, would have fled, or changed his purpose.

But the boys were paralyzed with fear; too much so

to turn and give the alarm to Redfern, or cry out and put our hapless lovers on their guard.

The moment had come which Victor had selected for the deadly assault.

Heaven protect them!

CHAPTER XXX.

STRUCK DOWN.

IT did.

A branch of a fallen pine, which protruded from a fissure of the rock, and which the assassin depended upon in his leap, broke beneath his weight with a loud crash, and threw him violently upon one knee.

John turned instantly, by no means divining the cause. His eye took in the meaning of it all, however, at a glance, as he recognized Victor with the uplifted knife, who had immediately regained his feet, and was about to bury the weapon in Blanche's fair bosom.

As John confronted him, Victor turned and made two desperate cuts at him, either of which would have been fatal had it taken effect as intended.

But Victor had met "a foeman worthy of his steel," which he soon recognized with that "stern joy" which Scott attributes to the warrior.

John sprang upon him with the coolness and audacity of one who never knew the name of fear.

Nothing that the practised pugilist and athlete, Victor, had ever encountered, could compare with the adroit alertness with which John, by a mere turn of his wrist, parried the resistless stroke of the knife, and sent it each

time whizzing harmless through the air to the right and left of him.

At the same time he delivered, between the eyes of his antagonist, his "one, two," hitting straight out from the shoulder, blows which would have sent an opponent of lighter metal, less resolute, or less firm on his "pins," incontinently "to grass," without ceremony.

From that moment Victor felt a respect for the "Cornisher" he had never previously dreamt of entertaining.

His eyes fairly blazed with excitement, as John was about to repeat the application, gathering himself together for the purpose of giving more tremendous effect to his design.

It was either to fell him senseless, as a butcher would an ox, or disconcert him sufficiently by his blows to enable him to close and grapple with him, whereby he hoped that his superior weight would tell greatly in his favor.

He trusted, could he accomplish this, he might at once disarm him, throw him heavily with his entire weight upon his chest, and did he succeed in this, the victory was not far off or doubtful.

But he reckoned without his host. As he struck out with the force of muscle and sinew exerted to the utmost, and backed and impelled by the brawny shoulder to the very loins, Victor dropped like lightning on one knee, to avoid "punishment," and the next instant John felt all his tremendous impetus wasted in air.

He would have himself fallen over his antagonist upon his face, had not his progression been arrested by a violent blow below the ribs, evidently aimed higher up, and a sharp pang, by which he knew the knife had entered his side to a dangerous depth.

He felt the blade as quickly withdrawn, and himself lifted, as though by an explosion, and sent whirling and spinning through the air to a distance which made his fall one of stunning and nearly fatal effect.

Nothing but his thick, curly hair and obstinate, hard head prevented him from being killed instantly.

As it was, love, which was stronger in him than love of life itself, presented but one image to his distracted mind. Blanche—Blanche at the mercy of the fiend—Blanche—his own dear Blanche, his affianced, his bride, murdered—murdered in his very presence, unless some supernatural power were given him to prevent it.

Frenzied by the thought, he ejaculated one wild prayer to heaven, that he might "save her—save her, and let him—let him perish," and with an effort, of which he was hardly conscious, he rose to his feet, and dusty, torn, bleeding and crushed as he was, he sprang towards the assassin with the superhuman fury of a madman.

He was not a moment too soon. Poor Blanche had swooned, and all unconscious as she lay at the foot of the rifted rock, the diabolical wretch had seized her by the hair, which, torn from its fastenings by the assault, enveloped her form like a mourning veil, dragged her to the edge of the precipice upon which the pathway verged, and that instant had lifted the knife, still reeking with the blood of her dauntless defender, and the next would have buried it to the handle in that gentle heart which loved him dearly.

The sight concentrated all John's rage and resentment, until he was no longer a reasoning, a human being.

He seized Victor, who felt himself as though in the grapple of an earthquake, tore him, imprecating, struggling, yet powerless as an envenomed serpent in the talons

of a condor, apart from his adored object of this villain's hate, lifted him poised an instant high above his head, clutching at the empty air, and hurled him with the force of a thunderbolt far out and down, down, down over the jagged rocks, into the boiling torrent below.

Here met the two mountain streams, swollen and raging with the contributions of a thousand lesser streams, surcharged by recent and continuous rains.

They swept him instantly from sight, and the moment after, the heroic lover sank white and motionless at the feet of his rescued bride.

CHAPTER XXXI.

VANISHED.

DAYS and weeks of anxious watching and administrations by the bedside of our hero, who had been conveyed carefully, by the assistance of villagers, summoned speedily by our little friends, Beetle and Grigg, direct to the distressed home of Father Millburn, and the unremitting attention of Dr. Daws, at last, were crowned with success.

Blanche was soon restored, and devoted herself from that moment, with untiring vigilance and grateful affection, to the recovery of her preserver.

The events we have described in the preceding chapter, though occupying time in the relation, were so rapid in transpiring as just to allow the loitering, sluggish steps of Redfern to arrive on the scene at the moment when

John sunk to earth, exhausted by the struggle and loss of blood.

His knowledge of woodcraft was invaluable here, as it qualified him, by the application of proper bandages and restoratives, to keep the life in the brave fellow while he superintended his removal, and that of Blanche, to her father's house.

He remained with them, employed as we have said, while the boys went for the requisite assistance.

It is unnecessary for us to say that this memorable occurrence furnished a topic of never-declining interest for the boys, as long as they were boys, and forever settled the mooted question between them, regarding the combatants, as to "which could whip."

During his convalescence John still more and more endeared himself to the whole household by his patient, *feminine* endurance of suffering, and the Christian charity and resignation he displayed in all his words and conduct.

When the danger was over, his final recovery assured, and he was so far advanced towards it that he was permitted to converse with Blanche—which the poor fellow wanted to do from the first—he told her many of the circumstances of his life previous to his appearance in the village.

He spoke of his father and mother and elder brother, and of the old home in Cornwall.

He was what is called "a younger son." From his youth he had a passion for the pursuits of mining, which were going on all around him. The time he was at home from school and college, in his earlier life, he passed among the miners and other workmen, in their cottages, or in the mines themselves, and had thus

acquired considerable knowledge and experience of these poor people and their occupations.

His dream had ever been to facilitate and enhance the value of their labor, and ameliorate their own condition physically and spiritually; for John was religious in his own way, which might not please some strict sectarians, therefore we will not enlarge upon it.

Shortly before the death of his parents, having attained his majority, he was commissioned a cornet in the Royal Rifles, "Her Majesty's Own" regiment, in London. The army or the ministry was, and is, the only alternative for the younger sons of the nobility and gentry of the United Kingdom.

Then the poor fellow confessed he had led a gay, wild, *extravagant* life, which at that time few of the army could escape, or were exempt from.

This was never complained of on the part of his parents, and his debts, although exceeding his allowance beyond all reason, were again and again cheerfully paid by his indulgent father.

At last that kind father suddenly died, his mother survived him little more than a week, and he was left thereupon dependent altogether on his trifling income, and the tender mercies of his elder brother, who succeeded to the estates.

Of that brother he said no more than that he was thought and believed to be hard, cold, and selfish.

Certain it is that he was constantly complaining and expostulating on the subject of the then young lieutenant's expenditures, and the mildest of the terms he employed in characterizing his life was that it was "idle, wasteful, dissolute, and shameful." "Which it really was *not*—not altogether so bad, Blanche, at all," said John, with amusing simplicity.

"Extravagant it was, I admit, and foolish, very, very foolish and idle. But beyond keeping a row-boat or two, and a bit of horseflesh, and a few hounds, and betting a little—ah, the betting!—that was the worst, and that's what smashed me up and swamped me altogether.

"The darker vices beyond hard drinking on festal occasions sometimes—which I admit were pretty frequent—I solemnly assure you, my darling, I never, never was tainted with."

At this outburst of truth and poetry Blanche drooped her modest head and could have kissed him had she dared.

And still he got better day after day.

The wound, which had been a deep and dangerous one, threatening his life more than once or ten times, from cicatrizing proceeded to healing, and when that process was nearly complete his strength, which had almost all departed, gradually returned and his cheek began to show a faint tinge of color, and the hollow eye to fill out and sparkle with a gleam of his old quiet humor.

But it needed the open air, strong food, and vigorous exercise to restore the full proportions of that herculean frame, and the fresh, rosy roundness peculiar to the cheek of an islander.

All in good time, John. All in good time, noble fellow. "Fortune favors the brave," and who will dispute that you are one?

On a certain day he had Blanche called up, for he was well enough now to leave his bed and sit in Father Millburn's great arm-chair through the day, and not until then would she leave his sick-chamber, where sometimes Rosa, sometimes her brother Joe, more often both,

and sometimes her father or Dr. Daws, would bear her company.

He told her then the conclusion of his story. How he, by reason of his very slender allowance, and in consequence of heavy losses on the turf and elsewhere, and the stern refusal of his brother to assist him further, was compelled to sell out everything, including his commission itself, to pay his so-called "debts of honor."

Then, how, stung with rage and mortification, he relinquished the pittance that had always been grudgingly paid by his brother, and turned his back upon his native land determined to work, beg, or starve in that boasted free America of which he had heard and read so much.

"The rest you know, my dear. When I first, directed by heaven, laid eyes on you I had been but a fortnight in the country. And here ever since.

"Now, to inform you of what I had especially to say to you. But first, perhaps, I might as well explain in confidence to you solely whence I derived the funds with which father's—for he is my father, henceforth, as he has been to me from the first, God bless him—father's debts were paid.

"I brought with me certain valuables, trinkets, etc., given me by my dear departed mother; these were deposited in the safety vaults of the Bank of New York. I could not make them available, intrinsically valuable as they were, without a clear exhibit of my title to the same and how I became possessed of them, which involved a conclusive proof of my identity and also demonstrated what were my prospects in the event of the death of my only brother, who was unmarried.

"This I deemed it best in the emergency to make, and offered them as security for the use of the required sum, with the result which you have seen.

"The position which I held as an officer of the Queen's Own brought me into association with a rank far beyond my own at court, and the general acquaintance which I possessed with the principal mining capitalists of my native country enabled me, by letters and the necessary documents, to procure the co-operation of certain of these in father's plans. Which is all of that."

"Dear, dear John—" murmured Blanche, looking upon him with glowing eyes.

"As I was saying," continued "dear John," "I made the acquaintance at court of many officials and diplomats. Among the rest was Mr., now Sir Edward Thornton, since the British Minister at Washington.

"With my letters to-day is one from Washington—from him—in which he says he proposes to do himself—he means me—the honor of being present at my nuptials and desires to know what day has been appointed for that purpose. I don't know, myself. I ask you."

After considerable conversation in a low tone earnestly on that subject and one or two trips down-stairs "to speak with father" and up again to "speak with dear John," the latter important personage seemed at last to be altogether satisfied, as he remarked joyfully—

"Thank you, thank you, darling. So be it. I shall be quite well by then, and ready to travel. I will write him, it is to take place in the church of the village here, at noon on Monday morning, January 10th, 187–. Now run down and comfort father a bit, while I write my letters."

It is our duty now, unpleasant and even painful as it may be, as faithful chroniclers, to relate what became of Victor Forestal.

The next day, the whole course of the mountain tor-

rent was narrowly and frequently explored, but without success, in the hope of recovering the body.

There was no vestige of him found whatever, beyond the murderous weapon, which was picked up a few yards from the brink of the stream, half imbedded in leaves and sand, where it had been left by the retiring waters.

It was generally supposed that the body had been washed down the entire extent of the valley, and out into the Hudson, beyond the mountains.

Search was discontinued as that conviction gained ground, and it was not until about ten days afterwards, while John lay at the point of death, it was supposed, that the mystery was to a certain extent cleared up.

An item appeared simultaneously in all the New York dailies, and the same was telegraphed by the agents of the associated press over the length and breadth of the whole country, and of course found its way to, and created an immense sensation in Millburn. It was to this effect:

"THE GOLD PANIC—ANOTHER SUICIDE.—The body of Victor Forestal, only son and child of the late Col. C. C. Forestal, whose lamentable suicide, as one of the results of the gold failures, we noticed in a recent edition of our paper, was found this morning in a back basement room of his dismantled late palatial residence on Fifth Avenue, fronting Madison Square.

"The private watchman, who has charge of the premises, testified before the coroner's inquest, that the deceased had been absent from the city for a length of time on business, and probably hearing of the failure and suicide of his father, which failure, it is understood, involved him also, must have returned to the deserted

mansion secretly, the night before, and committed the rash act it is our sad duty to report.

"His night-latch key, by which he entered, was found in the door where he had left it.

"The body was found extended upon the floor, the entire upper portion of the skull having been blown off, and the brain scattered in all directions over the room.

"The pistol, a large navy (Colt's patent) revolver, which lay beside him with only one chamber discharged, the rest loaded and undisturbed, was unquestionably the instrument employed in the commission of the deed.

"All concomitant circumstances, the situation of the body, and well-known character of the deceased, preclude suspicion of foul play.

"There being no assets whatever, and no relative appearing to claim the body, it was taken possession of by the coroner and decently interred alongside that of his father, in Potter's Field, at the expense of the corporation."

Thus miserably perished, by his own hand, the once intellectual, accomplished, young, brave, handsome and wealthy, but unprincipled, selfish and cruel Victor Forestal.

Not a victim of the gold panic altogether, but another added to those who similarly perish every day; victims of pampered appetites and misdirected energies and aims.

Thus was he hurried from crime to crime, and by crime to the judgment seat of God.

Victor Forestal was an only child and his mother had died in giving him birth. All his statements, therefore, concerning female relatives were pure fabrication—a part

of the plot devised for the betrayal and destruction of Blanche Millburn.

The Fifth avenue mansion had been maintained by his father and himself solely for mercenary aggrandizement.

Male and female servants, upper and under, were the only other occupants.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WEDDING-DAY.

If we have not sufficiently prepared the reader for what is to follow, it will be a matter of surprise to us, and there will be new surprises for him in what we are about to relate.

"Christmas comes but once a year," but it did come at last in the year 186—, and a merry Christmas it was in Millburn.

Beetle and Grigg enjoyed it hugely. There was no end to the tricks they played all day with fire-crackers, which the post-office furnished; and nearly all night with fire-works and bonfires, which Bob Redfern superintended.

John Watt was entirely well, and about again; by long odds the most popular and best-beloved man in the village, next to the doctor.

New Year's day, January 1st, 187—, came next in due season, and a charming day it was. Mild, clear and balmy as spring.

Everybody called on Blanche, who kept open house, with the blooming Rose to assist her.

The gentlemen were all out visiting.

Bob Redfern called on Clotilda Spinner.

John Watt called on everybody, and invited all to the church on the 10th instant. Other parties were secretly busy and equally interested, as we shall see anon.

The church had been dressed with evergreens for Christmas, but was freshly decorated for the important ceremonies which were to come off now.

For the 10th of January had arrived, and it was fully eleven o'clock A. M.

The special invitations to the ceremony had been issued on the 3d instant, and of course the whole neighborhood, for miles and miles around, was agog with anticipation.

What with the arrivals from distant towns, which were numerous—for it appeared that our hero was more widely known and estimated than he had been aware—and the influx of the neighboring inhabitants, whose curiosity was insatiable, the two hotels were crowded in every part.

Especially Todd's. The Spread Eagle came pretty near bursting that day with sudden inflation.

Jennie Spry herself, fond as she was of bustle, would have been distracted. But Jennie was not there; she had long ago quit her place in the inn.

The Spread Eagle had its best suite of apartments that day reserved for the occupancy of distinguished guests, who arrived about nine o'clock, by private conveyance, very quietly and unostentatiously.

Mr. Thornton, leaving his wife at the hotel, posted

straight to Millburn House, and held a long conference with our hero.

Never rang wedding-bells such a merry peal in country village since Arcadia was a kingdom, as they did that cloudless, balmy, June-like morning of January, 187—.

Never had the village street been so crowded with all classes of pedestrians and all descriptions of vehicles.

The holidays which had preceded had not called them out like this.

The little graveyard to the left of the wooden church was completely hidden by the horses and wagons, carry-alls, buggies and conveyances of all kinds, which were tied up to the palings, posts and scattered trees outside its solemn precincts.

The space beneath the leafless locust-grove, in front of the church, was crowded with the carriages of the bridal-party and invited guests. The shutters were closed, and the church, which was luckily rather spacious, for a dense crowd had obtained admission, was artificially lighted, as if for evening service.

The effect of the transition from garish noonday to the mellow radiance of lamplight, streaming sweetly through cedar, holly-boughs and mistletoe, with their scarlet and pearl berries, variegated with abundantly interspersed flowers, was soothingly pleasant, and disposed one to tender reverie.

Until the entrance of the bridal party, the decorous assemblage occupied itself with silent observation, and mental approval or objection to whatever met the eye.

The clergyman, Dr. Wedlock, who entered the chancel from the vestry-room in full robes, and took his position at the altar, looked more than usually solemn, stately, and important.

Nevertheless that he was rather flurried was apparent to all the eyes which immediately selected him as a focus, as though they had never seen him before.

Increased buzz and commotion about the church entrance betokened the arrival of the bridal party.

It was to be a double wedding, for Joe Millburn and Rosa Moss were to be married on the same occasion.

A chorus of fresh young voices here struck up to a lively accompaniment on the organ.

The procession entered the church in the following order:

Sabbath-school children (*scattering flowers*).
Groomsmen and bridesmaids (*two of each*).
Bride and bridegroom (*Blanche and John*).
Sir Edward Thornton and wife.
Groomsman and bridesmaid (*one of each*).
Bride and bridegroom (*Rosa and Joe*).
Father and uncle of the brides.

They proceeded down the middle aisle to the altar railing, when the Sabbath-school children withdrew, and the brides stood facing the assembly, each on the right of her bridegroom.

The bridesmaids taking their position at her right, and the groomsmen at the left of the bridegroom.

Father Millburn stood on the right of the clergyman, Sir Edward Thornton on his left.

As they are there at the altar, amid the hush of the interested observers, we will glance at a few of the rich costumes of the ladies; especially those of the brides.

Blanche was attired in a rich white satin, with train, low bodice, displaying the swanlike, queenly neck and shoulders, which were only rendered more bewildering through the mist of the magnificent snowy veil, which

depended from her crown of simple orange blossoms, and streamed like a gleam of moonlight to her dainty feet.

She wore no ornament other than a simple spray of the lily of the valley in her bosom, and around her throat a necklace of superb diamonds—the latter as the gift and at the especial request of the bridegroom.

Rosa Moss wore a white silk poplin, with white satin and white lace trimmings. The dress made in the style of Blanche's. She wore no ornament beyond the wreath of orange blossoms and filmy white veil, and a single moss-rose in her bosom.

The very peculiar and fantastic manner, however, in which she had curled and frizzed her wealth of golden hair, made her the envy and secret admiration of all the village belles, and the distraction and despair of the youthful swains.

She was rosier, plumper, and prettier than ever, and her nose even seemed to turn up at the minister, so decidedly retroussè was it.

The bridesmaids were simply dressed in white, and were all of them pretty village beauties, whose turn would inevitably soon come to be brides.

John—our John—wore a dress-coat, faced with white satin, a white satin vest, black pantaloons, black silk stockings and pumps, white kid gloves, and a white cravat, and never looked handsomer or nobler in his life.

Joe Millburn was similarly attired, with the exception of a plain dress coat and dress boots.

He had recovered his healthy sunburnt hue, and looked to be, as he was, every inch the sailor, and entering upon a new voyage of life

John Watt and Blanche were married first.

Father Millburn gave her hand to Sir Edward, who, as the representative of the Queen, handed her to the clergyman, who received her, and joined the right hands of our dear friends—and thus the bride was given away.

The ring used was a massive and peculiar one, which had been an heirloom in the family of the bridegroom.

"Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder," proclaimed the minister of Heaven.

The mysterious understanding there appeared to exist between the bridegroom, Sir Edward, Dr. Daws and the clergyman convinced the assembly that there must be something in the vague rumors, whence derived they knew not, to distinguish the marriage just attended, as one of no ordinary interest.

Consequently, numbers pressed forward to examine the church record, as soon as the rather long ceremony of signing and witnessing was concluded.

All was verified when the following signatures were disclosed:

"John Walter Vyvyan Grenville, Earl of Saint Aubyn, and Blanche Millburn."

On the part of Her Majesty The Queen. } SIR EDWARD THORNTON, *British Minister.*

The other signatures were those of the father of the bride and Dr. Daws. The bridegroom's signature was surmounted with the impression in wax of his family seal —the coronet of an earl.

The presence of Sir Edward Thornton was now fully explained.

The simple-hearted, honest fellow whom we have known so long, intimately and familiarly as John Watt,

had really become, by the sudden death of his elder and only brother, the powerful Lord St. Aubyn, the representative of one of the purest, oldest and most powerful peerages in the kingdom of Great Britain. He was the Rt. Hon. the Earl of St. Aubyn, and Lady Blanche was his Countess.

His estates comprised nearly all of those towns, villages, mines, manors and castles, of which he had so modestly discoursed to Blanche during his illness, and his home was Launceston Castle, in Cornwall, whither they were next to proceed.

And Blanche, our darling—whom we have soon to part with now—had become his Countess, to be known thenceforth as Lady Blanche, Countess of Saint Aubyn.

We are sorry for it. But it can't be helped. However little some of us may relish her title, we cannot avoid loving Blanche herself the same. It will produce no change in her, anymore than we perceive it has done in her husband.

How well the dear fellow managed to preserve his secret unsuspected! He always contended he was afraid to divulge it, lest he should lose Blanche. Afraid she would refuse him, on the ground that he, John, might suspect her of mercenary and selfish motives.

That may have been one reason, but, doubtless, the real one was this: He wished to ascertain if she loved and would marry him for himself alone.

And she did.

The ceremony which followed—the marriage of Joe Millburn and Rosa Moss—the Moss Rose now for the last time, attracted its due share of interest.

There were many—very many—who were profoundly affected, and gratified too, to see these faithful lovers, who

had been so long, so often and so cruelly parted, at last united, never to be parted on earth again with impunity.

Henceforth they were to be known and loved—for to know them was to love them also—as Joseph and Rosa Millburn.

The bridal party left the church amid the congratulations of all, which St. Aubyn received in the old manner of John Watt, and the Countess so precisely like the unassuming and gentle-hearted Blanche Millburn that you would have affirmed and asseverated she was one and the same person.

As for Father Millburn, the good old man had long ago set his heart on higher things than earldoms or principalities.

He was only ambitious to "read his title clear to mansions in the skies."

The Reverend Dr. Wedlock found between the leaves of the book, from which he had recited the service, one of the biggest marriage fees he had ever received, or in fact heard of, in the whole course of his ministry.

Decidedly, thought his worthy helpmeet, that night, the crop of matrimony was looking up. She wondered what would come next.

The wedding-dinner at Millburn House was a great success. It took place immediately upon the return from the church, for the bridal pairs were to set out that night on a wedding-tour—Joe and Rosa's trip to last not longer than a week or two, when they would return to Millburn House, where, for the future, Rosa was to reside, and supply Blanche's place in the care and companionship of Father Millburn, who loved her as though she were indeed his child.

Joe was to take his brother-in-law's place in the management of the mines, for the present only, aided and assisted by Redfern, who supplied in zeal somewhat that he lacked in knowledge.

The Earl and Countess of St. Aubyn were to separate from the other bridal-party in New York, and cross the Atlantic in the steamship City of Washington, for Liverpool.

Thence they would proceed to London, be presented at the first "drawing-room of the Queen" after their arrival, and leave immediately for Launceston Castle, Lord St. Aubyn's old baronial hall.

In three or four months they were to return to Millburn, and effect final arrangements for the future.

At the banquet were present a good many with whom the reader is unacquainted, for the reason that they have had no important connection with this history; but also many whom he does know.

For instance, Father Millburn sat at the head of the long table, with Sir Edward Thornton on his right, and Dr. Daws on his left.

Rose's father occupied the other end of the table, with Dr. Wedlock on his right, and Redfern on his left.

The brides sat together, each by her new-made husband, about the centre of the table, and never was a more beautiful sight beheld, so contrasting, and, on that very account, so charming a combination, as the sisters Blanche and Rosa—the Lily of the Valley and the Moss Rose—bound together by so tender and sweet a tie.

The toasts that were drunk, the speeches that were made, in compliment and congratulation, and in returning thanks, the witticisms, etc., the songs that were sung, both before and after the ladies left, and indeed after the

carriages containing the newly married, accompanied by Sir Edward and Dr. Daws, had departed *en route* to the city of New York, would, if fully written out, fill a volume.

Forbid that it should be done. These things are like the flowers and cold remains of the feast itself next day, "dull, stale, flat and unprofitable."

Suffice it to say that they had the merriest and happiest of all possible times of it, only varied when it came to the tears of temporary parting.

These were soon dried, no doubt satisfactorily on all sides, and the "mirth and fun grew fast and furious" as the revel was resumed beneath the virtuous roof of good old Father Millburn, who had gone to bed after fervently saying his prayers, and slept through it all.

Despite of his seventy-six years, he never heard a sound. So much for an easy conscience.

In the meantime, the carriages containing our friends had climbed over Flag Staff Hill, and were galloping down toward Dover, filled with as happy hearts as ever "beat time to the music of the union."

Heaven bless, keep and return thee safe to us again, noble John Watt, and loving, "pure-womanly" Blanche.

If ever there was a nobleman on earth, "thou art the man," St. Aubyn.

If ever there was a true and perfect lady, "thou art she," Lady Blanche.

A lord and a lady, had no titles ever been invented.

Fare-thee-well, thou little rogue, Madam Millburn.

Madam, forsooth! I wonder how it will set upon her?

Good luck go with thee, thou jolly sailor-boy. Wear

thy blushing little Moss Rose, as thou hast all along done, in thy heart of hearts.

Ye may be all happy, but *we*, who are left alone, we feel melancholy, now that—

THE WEDDING-DAY IS OVER.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONCLUSION.

MATRIMONY is contagious. There is no doubt of it.

Joe Millburn no sooner had his back turned than, in spite of all the boys, Beetle and Grigg, could do and advise, Bob Redfern sneaked off, one foggy evening, under the cover of darkness, accompanied by Simeon Simples, whose poverty, but not his will, had consented —he had remained single so long—and by Jennie Spry, as witnesses to the nefarious transaction, met Clotilda Spinner at Dr. Wedlock's, by appointment, and there disgracefully married her.

We say "disgracefully," for we know how often he swore he wouldn't. After that never believe any man.

Poor Sim was dreadfully frightened at first, but if he had not been so manfully backed up by Jennie he never would have survived the shock to his nerves. As it was he lost his presence of mind once, and had he also lost a paper, which he had carried in his pocket until it was nearly worn out, he would not, could not, have been guilty of the shocking indiscretion which he committed.

That paper, which was a license, was the accessory

before the fact. Jennie was the principal, however; and now the murder's out.

Simeon Simples married Jennie Spry.

Another reason for that was Jennie let him.

How he obtained her consent I can't imagine. It must have been some moment of weakness, or goodness, which comes over us all at times. Or it might have been the frequent occurrence of such things in her sight of late, and one more repetition in that little confined parlor of Doctor Wedlock's was too much for her laughing philosophy.

Howbeit, she succumbed, and became Mrs. Simeon Simples—but not the apothecary's wife.

The story is short in explanation. Some weeks before the weddings at the church, Dr. Daws crossing the street, which he often did, to Sim's little shop, found that responsible individual lying a cold corpse, to all appearances, behind his counter.

He would not have known he was in the shop at all, and might have left, when Sim's fate would certainly have been sealed, had not Sim's legs stuck out across the little aisle or passageway he had had constructed near one end of his counter.

The doctor knew Sim's habits, likewise his weaknesses, likewise those legs. That he wouldn't get drunk —never got drunk—therefore it was not liquor. But he was mighty apt to poison others inadvertently.

Doubtless he had made another mistake, and this time tried it on himself; or possibly, as the weak youth was distractedly in love, he had purposely taken some noxious drug.

The doctor went to work without delay, and had the extreme happiness, after superhuman exertions lasting an

hour, of reanimating poor Sim, who, it transpired afterwards, had actually poisoned himself with oxalic acid, which he had mistaken for glauber salts.

This was too much for Sim and the kind-hearted doctor too. The latter concluded that the blundering apothecary deserved to be made an example of; so, as a punishment, and to save others from a worse fate, he complained to the authorities at Washington, and had Sim put in the post-office.

In other words Sim was made village post-master, and the apothecary-shop was disposed of to a not more worthy perhaps, but certainly more careful and competent chemist.

The receipt of a steady salary, no doubt, inspired Sim with the courageous idea which, as we have seen, resulted so successfully.

Clotilda Redfern went to live with Bob at the old curiosity-shop, turned that establishment upside down; made up with the boys; accepted the apologies of the yellow dog, who accepted the situation and his new mistress' reconstruction policy, and was permitted to keep his place, which he holds to this day—against all other new-comers—in the yard.

She makes Bob a capital wife, and while improving him, actually improves herself.

So, while there is life there is hope. There is nothing like indefatigable perseverance.

Beetle got his five hundred dollars, divided handsomely with Grigg, and they are both back in New York, engaged in all manner of speculations, and as the boys wrote to their worthy uncle and aunt Redfern, "making money, and going ahead like a house afire."

Jennie Simples is quite at home in the post-office, and

is honestly trying very hard to conquer her innate propensity to tease Sim and flirt with everybody who calls.

But, bless your soul, there is not a more innocent-minded young person in the world than Jennie Simples, *née* Spry.

The body of Bill Curry made its mysterious reappearance after many weeks, below the dam in an eddy of a deep and dark pool, whose origin or source has not yet been discovered.

But we who know the circumstances of his murder on that part of the lake called The Bottomless Pit, can readily determine that the said pool must be one of the subterranean outlets of the lake.

The body was so swollen, disfigured and decomposed, that it would not have been identified, but for the deformed knuckles of the left hand, which had never regained their former appearance.

Wallis and Waters recognized this feature, and the former ever afterwards said, "Ef that Bill Curry hadn't been drownded he'd a been hanged certain!"

Let us be more charitable.

The late-mentioned worthies are still in the commission of the peace in Millburn, and continue the terror of all evil doers.

This especially applies to Knob Wallis. Grub, Grigg's unnatural parent, was buried alive, and perished miserably in Bill Curry's grave, which, in his professional capacity, he had just dug. It caved in upon him as he was adjusting the coffin of the murdered man therein.

Of course he was dug out, but as he was quite dead, had no money, no friends, was a common nuisance, and there was no coroner; in view of all the circumstances and his well-known intimacy with the previous tenant,

it was judged best to put him back speedily, which was done, without benefit of clergy.

Grigg nor anybody ever missed or mourned for him.

Todd, the colonel, and proprietor of the "Spread Eagle," not long ago, toddled off the stage of being singing a bacchanalian song.

His epitaph has not yet been inscribed upon his tomb —the quietest house he ever occupied—but it should be remembered at the proper time. It is:

"Hic! hic! hic-*up!*"

Grimes, the undertaker, has undertaken to keep the hotel.

"Ole Mammy" has "gone to glory."

Aunt Lucy stays behind, in the same place.

Poor old Jeems Jobson died some time after the return of Joe and Rosa.

He was perfectly content to go, and his last words were, as he held a hand of each of his children, "Lord love ye, shipmet—Rose, my flower—" the rest was silence.

Safely moored in the little village graveyard alongside the church, a simple headstone marks the spot where the kind old sailor has come to anchor.

Father Millburn, Joe, Rosa, and dear old Dr. Daws—may such as he live a thousand years—are well and hearty, hourly expecting the arrival of the steamship which, according to a cable telegram of ten days ago, left the port of Liverpool for New York, having among her first-cabin passengers the Earl and Countess of St. Aubyn, better known and more welcome to all our hearts as John Watt and Blanche Millburn.

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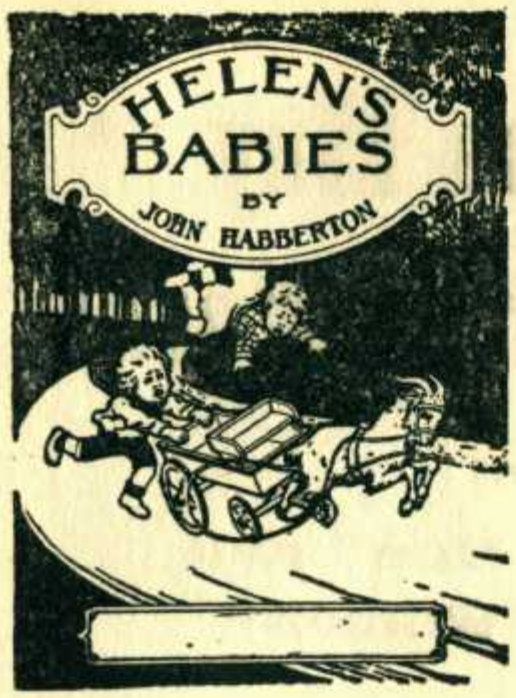

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